

A
DISCOURSE
ABOUT THE
Preciousness
OF
GOD's Thoughts
CONCERNING HIS
PEOPLE.

By *SAMUEL SLATER*, M. A.
Minister of the Gospel.

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Epistle Dedicatory.

To the Church of Christ meeting at
Crosby-Square in London.

Dearly Beloved,

I*T is now Five and Twenty Years and almost an Half, since I was by those of you who were at that Time Members, chosen and called to be your Pastor, and to labour among you in the Work of the Gospel. What my Doctrine and Conversation have been you know, together with the Opposition, and Discouragements which for a Time I met with from our common Adversaries; and likewise, what were our Gospel-enjoyments in those Days of Persecution, when some Raged and some Deserted, so that I think very few Sabbath's past over our Heads without assembling our selves together, if not in the whole Body, yet in considerable Numbers; and for the most Part our God was graciously pleas'd to be to us both a Sun and a Shield. Nunc hæc mihi ministrare juvat. I did never expect to have had the Thred of my*

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Life drawn out to so great a length as through Divine Mercy it is, nor to have been continued in my Masters Vineyard, when so many Younger and Stronger than I have been number'd out to the Grave. But I can in Truth say, it hath been my Desire while I lived here to live to Purpose, and for you as well as with you; and though I have no Reason to boast of my Self, or any thing that I have done, but to blush and be ashamed of my low Attainments, and poor Performances; yet have I abundant Cause to Glory in my God, for as much as with him I have found Mercy to be faithful, and also to rejoice in you who have been constant and that with Delight, in your Attendance on my Ministry, and in these shaking, unsteady Times been true to the great Truths of God, not turning aside to crooked Paths with the Workers of Iniquity: Nor flie-blown and tainted with those pestilent Errors which many in this Nation, too too many have entertained and embraced; yea, and keeping sound in Judgment, have, so far as I know, abating for humane Frailties and Infirmities, adorned the Doctrine of your God and Saviour; by living up to the Principles of our Holy Religion, and my hearty Prayer is, that you may be established, as well as anointed; water'd as well as planted in the House of your God, so as to abound more and more in Goodness, and all the Fruits of Righteousness,

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ousness; for sure I am, and your selves know it too, that the best of you have not as yet attained, neither are ye already perfect. This also hath afforded me no small Pleasure and Delight, that when there have been Differences and Divisions, Animosities and Contentions among other hot-headed Professors, to the Reproach of Religion, and the scandalizing of many; you have walked in Love and Unity, studying the Things which make for Peace. The good Lord grant you may go on to do so, yea, that you may do so always, and in that way grow up to him in all Things who is the Head, even Christ.

You that know me, know I am no Self-admirer, nor have I at any Time made it my choice to appear in Print; neither have I been forward to enlarge mine Acquaintance with others, judging it a Work and Honour sufficient for me to take due Care of mine own Vineyard. Some few Funeral Sermons excepted, I have only made Publick Two Tractates, the one concerning Closet-Prayer, the other about Family-worship, and a little Company of Verses first designed for the Private Use and Relief of a poor Melancholick, Distressed and Shatter'd Christian. Which blessed be God, have met with good Acceptance. The following Discourses, which are now come abroad into the World were Five Years ago Preached among you, and there are those that can tell how since then I have been pursued and urged with

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earnest and reiterated Desires to commit them to the Press; but all this while I have resisted that Importunity, till being at last quite wearied out, and almost ashamed, I could stand it out no longer. About the Entertainment which they will meet with from others, I am not over-sollicitous, being not ambitious of popular Applause, and having in some measure Learned in whatsoever State I am therewith to be contented. And if at any Time, I meet with slights and disrespect from any, who possibly do not know themselves so well as they should, I can pass it with a Smile, while I consider that Passage of my dearest Saviour, That the Disciple must not be above his Master, nor the Servant above his Lord. And indeed I have in mine own Breast fixed a Resolution of being even with them, not in returning them Disrespect for Disrespect, but by being as low and little in mine own Eyes, as I am in theirs. In short, as it was with Paul, so it is with me, a very small Thing to be judged of Mens Judgment, since He that judgeth me and them too is the Lord. And if in the great Day of Account, I shall be accepted of him, and commended by him, as one that hath been faithful in my little, that will be abundantly enough for me.

But the Thing is now done, my Friends have prevailed and obtain'd, though such Work as this is more fit for such as have nimbler Fan-

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cies and Fingers than I have now, yet I did engage to it, and with the Assistance of my good God have gone thorough it, and now it presents it self to you, please to bid it welcome for the Truths Sake and the Authors, and afford it a friendly Reception. It will not cost you much, but in Case you be not wanting to your selves, may Profit you much more; and that it may do so, the good Lord accompany it with his Blessing, for without that Paul is nothing, and Apollos is nothing; Sermons Preached and Printed, will be of no avail. Whereas if He will set his Hand to it, the dullest Tool shall do the Work; but what ever the Event be I can assure you my Design herein hath been good and generous, not that any profit may come into mine own Purse, but a great deal to your Souls.

These Sermons have no less, no other than the great and ever-blessed God with his most gracious Thoughts of and for his People, for their Subject. That God by whose Power we were all made at first, upon whose Care and Goodness we do all Live at present, at whose Tribunal we must all at last Appear, and stand to receive our final Sentence; and in the Eternal Fruition of whom we must be Happy, if ever you be so. I hope you all believe there is such a glorious Being; and that he is a constant and curious Observer of all Persons, and all their Actions, and a liberal Rewarder of them that diligent-

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ly seek him. I know there are a great many practical Atheists in the World, yea, in thee O London! where He is known and his Name is great. This is too apparent in the Lives of Multitudes among us, and in the Ungodliness, the Unrighteousness, and gross Abominations, which have over-flown all Banks, and almost delug'd us, notwithstanding that Light which at this Day gloriously shines, and the strenuous Endeavours that are put forth by many worthy Persons for a Reformation of Manners; but for all this many are settled upon their Lees, and their Leudness is still in their Skirts, being resolutely wicked and prophane, hating to be reformed. And I fear there are too many Doctrinal Atheists, such in Principle, who have made it their work to delete and obliterate the Notion of a Deity, that so being delivered from the Fear of his Wrath, and a Judgment to come, they might go on in their Way with the more boldness, they might take the greater Pleasure in Unrighteousness. And I see nothing to the contrary, but that God in his Fury and just Indignation, may give up such profligate Wretches to so strong a Delusion as to believe such a Lie, and that in order to their being Damned; that they who while they were upon Earth would not be led into the belief of a God, neither by his Word, nor his Works of Creation and Providence may be in Hell convinced of his
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Being by *their Sense, while they do there, to their unexpressible Torment feel the Heat and Weight of his Wrath. But I am perswaded better Things of you, my Dear Friends; namely, that the belief of a God is so deeply fixed in your Hearts, as that it shall never be eradicated: Yea, that many of you have that fiducial and transforming Knowledge of this God, and the blessed Jesus whom he hath sent, as is the Way to Life Eternal, and the Beginning of it. And where such a good Foundation is well laid, it will be your Wisdom and Interest to build upon it, being Persons of such an excellent Spirit, Temper and Disposition, and leading such a well-order'd Conversation in the World, as such a Faith and Knowledge will naturally direct you to.*

All that have the Knowledge of this God, and the Use of their Reason cannot but grant, that among other, these Three Things are unquestionably due to God. An Holy Awe, and Reverential Regard of him, an intire Affection and Love, with Faith in him.

First, What is more proper for God, and becoming of Man than an Holy Awe, and Reverential Regard of him, the glorious Angels above do pay this to him by their covering their Faces with their Wings, while in his Presence, and by their cheerful and speedy Execution of his Pleasure; and if this Frame be not unworthy

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thy of Angels, *it cannot be below Men, who are but Dust and Ashes, Jer. 10. 7. Who would not fear thee, O thou King of Nations, for to thee it doth appertain. I speak not of a servile slavish Fear, which carrieth Torment in it; while Men look upon God only as cloathed with Terrour, and armed with Thunder, and so like poor affrighted Creatures would flee as fast, and get far from him as possibly they can; yea, if that could be done, quite out of his Reach and Sight. But that which I speak of is, a right filial Fear, flowing from the Spirit of a Child. Do not fear him meerly or mostly because He is above your Match, and you may be blasted by a rebuke of his Mouth, or Distracted by a Frown of his Brow, or Consumed by a Blow of his Hand; but principally fear to Sin against him, to offend him by sinning against him, to be a dishonour to his Name, and a grief to his Spirit; The Sacred Scripture tells us, this is the beginning of Wisdom: Till it have Place and Dominion in the Heart, egregious Folly; yea, down-right Madnes is predominant there, and will be so. The Person void of it, is an arrant Slave to Lust, and an easie Prey to Temptation; and may be carried Captive by the Devil at his Will. When Abraham sojourned in Gerar, he concluded the Fear of God was not there, and so expected nothing but outrageous Wickedness, Gen. 20. 11.*

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But wheresoever this Fear commands and bears sway it secures. Other Governours had done thus and thus, but so did not I, said good Nehemiah; because of the Fear of God, he did not do so, he dared not to do so, he abhorred to do so.

Do you therefore carry this about you as your Antidote. Blessed is the Man, in this Sense, who fears always, at Home and Abroad; in Company and alone, He that thus fears God will fear Men, lest they should entice him to Sin, and He will fear his own Heart, lest that should betray him. And in this fear there also is strong Confidence. It will deliver you from other dispiriting and pannick Fears, making you in the Way of your Duty bold as Lions. Moses saw him who is Invisible and fear'd him, whereupon he fear'd not the Wrath of Pharaoh, tho' he knew he had an hard Heart and long Arm. The Days we live in are Days of Uncertainty, dark and cloudy at present, and for ought we know they may be Stormy and Tempestuous; but if we fear God as we should, we need not fear any Thing, no more than the Three Children did the proud and cruel Nebuchadnezzar, when he threatned the casting of them into a Fiery Furnace, heated seven Times hotter than before; this is the best and nearest way to a real Greatness and Bravery of Spirit. Job feared God and eschewed Evil, as one that was resolved to be

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be neither flatter'd nor frighted into it; there are several pieces of Spiritual Armour commended to the Christian Souldier as very necessary for him, get them all, my Friends, be sure to put them on and to keep them on. And unto them, add this of an Holy Fear, which will be as a Bulwark or Intrenchment to you. By the Fear of the Lord there is a departure from the Evil of Sin, and by an Happy Consequence there is an avoiding the Evil of Punishment.

Secondly, As God deserves to be feared by us, because of his Infinite Greatness, Holiness and Justice; so is he the most proper and adequate Object of our Love, our best and dearest Love, because of his Goodness and Infinite Perfections together with those Kindnesses which He hath and doth for his People. The engaging and enlarging your Hearts yet more and more, was that which I mainly aimed at in the ensuing Discourse, wherein you may Read what his Thoughts of you and for you are, and from thence you may easily gather, what your Affections should be, what your Love to him, and what your Delight in him. This is frequently and earnestly called for in the Scriptures, by God himself, My Son give me thy Heart. Give it me not mine Enemy, give it me in Truth without Dissimulation, give it me in the whole without Dissimulation; a broken Heart is high-

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highly acceptable, a divided Heart is an utter Abomination. *And as it is called for by himself, so by his Saints, O Love the Lord all ye his Saints! Thus he commands it, thus He begs it, and know, for you to comply with this gracious Requiry is not only an Act of Obedience unto God, but likewise a real, yea, a singular Kindness to your selves. This giving will be your own Eternal making, the Fear of God will be a golden Curb to keep from Sin, the Love of God will be a golden Spur to quicken you to Duty. It will commend his Commandments to you, so that none of them will be counted grievous by you, and it will commend your Services to him, so that none will be rejected. Duties of Love are lovely Duties.*

Now in Order to your Loving God, labour to know him and to increase in that Knowledge, study him well, and get as clear and full sights of him, as you can while in transitu, by the Way; as great a sight of his Beauty, and as full a taste of his Sweetness. When the Sponse had been brought into the Banquetting-House, at her coming out again she was sick of Love; the Generality of Persons do miserably misplace their Love, and they will do so notwithstanding all that is or can be said to the contrary; placing it upon that which doth not deserve it, which cannot requite it. Some upon the Creatures, and others upon Sin; but both these will

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at the winding up of the Bottom, find themselves great losers. The Creatures are Vanity, and Love set upon them is debas'd, and will be disappointed, they paying it with Vexation. Sin defiles the Love and that issueth in Misery and Torment; but Love placed upon God is greatly innobled, and for certain shall be gloriously Rewarded.

Be sure therefore that you Love God, and still Love him more and more, whom you never can Love too much; if there be any Error herein, it will not be in the Excess but in the Defect. And let your Love to God fetch its full Compass, and take in all that is his. Love his Law, and have an hearty Respect to all his Commandments, for they all are Holy, Just, and Good. Love his Ways where-ever they lie, though they be Up-hill, though they be Rough and Rugged, though pav'd with Difficulties, and hedg'd with Thorns, and lin'd with Enemies, still remembering they are the Ways of God, and so Wisdom's Ways. At the end of them you will be sure to meet with great, yea, perfect Peace; so that nothing shall offend you: And at the present they are not without their pleasantness, but the Sun of Righteousness shining upon you, Heaven raining down Manna, the Rock following you, the Everlasting Arms upholding and embracing you, and some Clusters sent you in from the Land of Promise,
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even in this dry and barren Wilderness. Love his Truths, do not part with any of them, do not deny them, no not the least, for the very filings of Gold are precious. Love his Ordinances, prize them at an higher Rate than all your Earthly Enjoyments, be exceeding thankful for them, and very constant in your Attendance upon them; when God speaks to you by his Embassadors, be you his Auditors; and when in the Sacrament he spreads his Table for you, be you his Guests. Let him not find your Seats empty; and make the wisest and best Improvement of them you can, that you may not be like a company of Lean Kine in Green and Fat Pastures. Love his Sabbaths, remember to sanctifie and keep them Holy, make Conscience of doing it, yea, and do it out of Choice, calling these Days your Delight; considering how liberal He hath been in his Allowance of Time to you for your Secular Affairs, and while he hath reserved so small a Portion for his own Service, and likewise awe your selves with this serious and frequently repeated Thought, that to take any part of a Sabbath, and employ it about worldly Business or Recreations, is down-right Robbery, and that of the worst Kind, even Sacriledge, because it is a robbing of God. Love the Image of God wheresoever you see it, for that is indeed the Beauty and Glory of Man, and therefore Love them most, in whom you do
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see most of God, and likewise Love all them in whom you can see any Thing of God. So long as Persons hold the Head, and are sound in the Fundamentals of Religion, and by an unblameable, exemplary Conversation adorn the Doctrine of our God and Saviour, let not more Minute Differences in Opinion and Practice cause an Alienation; let not any who are for receiving the Lords Supper in the Evening, charge them with having Fellowship with Devils, who celebrate it at Noon. Hos quæ dementia cepit? Let us think with our selves how much the Great and Holy God doth bear with, wink at, pardon and pass by in us, yea, in the best of us, and shall we bear with nothing in them that are his. Surely such a Spirit doth not become the Children of such a Father, the People of such a God; and let all labour to be more like him, or not pretend to him. I beseech you, Let brotherly Love continue, let it increase; nay more, let it abound, and bring forth all its precious and pleasant Fruits. Be ye mutual Helps and Comforts, strengthen the weak Hands, confirm the feeble Knees, cheer the Disconsolate, reduce the Wanderer, relieve the Poor, and do it freely, cheerfully, as those who know it to be a Sacrifice with which God is well pleased. And if a Brother be overtaken with a Fault, ye which are Spiritual, endeavour the restoring him

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him with a Spirit of Meekness. Set that broken Bone with a tender Hand. This, My dear Friends, this is that Grace, which renders you exceeding like to that God, whom you call Father, for he is Love. This is that Grace which you shall carry with you into the other World. There are others which be necessary for you, and of great use while Commorant in this, such as Faith, Hope, and Patience; but as these have their whole Work and Employment here, so they will have their End here too. Let them keep you Company, so long as you are Travelling through this Wilderness, for they are very good Company, and will do you many a Kindness, but when once you are got to the Borders of the Celestial Canaan, they will leave you: There will be no Trial of Patience in Heaven, nor Exercise for it. There being no Burden to bear, no Evil to offend and trouble, no desired Good to wail for; and as for Faith, which is the Evidence of Things not seen, that will be converted into Vision, and Hope shall be swallowed up by a compleat and endless Fruition. But Love shall go along with you into those glorious Mansions, yea, there it shall be perfected; that which was here but a little Spark scarce able to keep the Heart warm, will be there blown up into a vehement Flame, and being once arrived at its Perfection, it shall never be extinguish'd, nor

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in the least diminish'd. In the mean Time, O Christians! be ye continually growing up in it; and adding to it, for by this means you will bring much Glory to God, and highly please your blessed Redeemer the Lord Jesus Christ, and credit the Holy Religion you profess, and adorn the Gospel under which you are planted, and stop the Mouths of your Adversaries, who rejoyce in your unbrotherly Contentions, and from thence take occasion to blaspheme, and speak Evil of the good Ways of God; and all that know you will be convinced, that you do indeed belong to him who is the Prince of Peace; and made it his Request to his Father, a little before his Last Sufferings, that there might be an Harmony and Agreement, and Oneness between his People; and that not only in the Countrey, which shall most certainly be, but also while they are walking upon the Way that leads thither.

Thirdly, *As this blessed God may most justly challenge your Fear and Love as due to him, so He doth above all deserve to be the Supream Object of your Faith and Confidence. All Creatures must have something or other to depend upon, Man must as well as others, for he is not Self-sufficient; now for him to depend upon any Thing on this side of God, is to go with a Lie in his Right Hand,*

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to lean upon a broken Reed, which instead of Supporting, will pierce him thorough with many Sorrows. But God being both self-sufficient, and all-sufficient, a Life of Faith upon him is both safe and comfortable; it is a Life appointed and laid out for him by Infinite Wisdom, while he is in his Minority and Pilgrimage-State, till He be taken up to that Life of Sight, which is intended and designed for him in the other and better World: And this is that Life which brings a great deal of Glory to God, and no less Security and Comfort to them that live it. Therefore my Advice to you all, both High and Low, Rich and Poor is this, look carefully to your Faith, take it in these Three Words, make sure that you have Faith, and that you increase it, and live by it.

First, Make sure that you have Faith. That which some pretend to is meer Fancy, and not Faith; and that which others please themselves with is Presumption, and not Faith. Mistakes in this Matter are very frequent, and no less dangerous; if they be not rectified before Men and Women come to die, they will prove fatal, and issue in their utter and Everlasting Ruine: If there is not here a repenting of them unto Life, there will for certain be in Hell a repenting which will be to no good Purpose. Therefore be ye wise before

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fore it is too late, put it out of Doubt and Question, that it is the true Grace of God in which you stand; that the Faith which you have is the Fruit of the Divine Spirit, that it is Faith unfeigned, the Faith of Gods Elect, that it is such a Faith as doth indeed Interest you in Christ, uniting you to him, and drawing vital Influences from him. See that you be able to prove it genuine by its noble Operations and Effects; namely, its purifying the Heart, and overcoming the World.

Secondly, Having cleared up to your selves the Truth of your Faith, press after a growth in it, do what you can toward the strengthening and increase of it. Labour for such a Faith as may not only Justifie you at present and Save you at last, which the weakest will do so it be true, but also glorifie God, as Abraham's did, and Comfort you at all Times, and in the greatest Changes. Such a well improved Faith, as may look through the thickest Clouds, and live in the most furious Storms, such a Faith as may Answer your Doubts, and scatters your Fears, and prevail against Temptations, and quench all the fiery Darts of the Devil. Such a Faith as may carry you through thick and thin, Swords and Daggers, and enable you to follow your Lord and Master, whithersoever he shall please to lead you
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by the Counsels of his Word, and the Hand of his Providence. *A weak Faith is not to be slighted and undervalued, who hath despised the Day of small Things? God doth not, and Men should not, but it is by no Means to be rested in; therefore you that are Rich in this World, see that you be not Poor in Faith, and you that are Poor in this World, see that ye be Rich in Faith. Being so, it will banish causeless Complaints from your Mouths, and bring Joy into your Hearts. And though now you do not see him whom you Love, nor have Things as you would, yet you will rejoice with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory. There is an Infinite Fulness in our God and Saviour, abundantly enough in the Covenant and Promises of the Gospel; the main Reason, why some real Christians thrive no better, and rejoice no more, lies in the Weakness of their Faith; for certain, as it is with your Faith, so it will be with you, both as to your Graces and Comforts. The stronger that is, the more easie will your Work be; the more flourishing your Graces, the firmer your Peace, and the more abundant your Consolations.*

Thirdly, Let me heartily commend to you the Life of Faith. Be ye much, yea, constantly in the Acting and Exercise of it. So Paul was, who tells us in Gal. 2. 20. That the Life which he liv'd in the Flesh, He li-

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ved by the Faith of the Son of God. And he found it so good, so sweet as that he was fixedly resolved to do so still; having committed himself to God, and put all his Concerns into his Hands, He would let them lie there, as knowing he could not possibly make a wiser Disposal. Write you, my dear Friends, after so fair a Copy, go and do so too. You are both commanded and encouraged to do it, Isa. 26. 4. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is Everlasting Strength. Yea, and Everlasting faithfulness, and Everlasting Cares. You can neither Trust God too far, nor too long. He hath ordered you to cast all your Care upon him, do it therefore since He hath not only given you leave, but made it your Work, keep none of it to your selves, except it be a Care of Duty and Diligence, all other will be unprofitable, and a burden too heavy for your Shoulders, breaking your Head and Heart too. Trust God therefore, be not afraid to do it, be not backward.

Trust him for Eternity, and for Time too. Trust him with your Souls and with your Bodies too, trust him for Support under Evils, and for the Supply of necessary Good. Trust him for to Day, and to Morrow, for this Year, and the next, and so on, in this Condition, and in that Condition, yea, and in every

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every Condition; because He is good in all, and fainteth not, neither is he weary. Trust in him in your greatest Fulness, as knowing that He is better than all, and that all without him is nothing. Trust on him in your most pinching wants, as knowing that He is enough alone, and also hath other Things at his Command, both Heaven and the Glory of that, and Earth and the Fulness of that: Trust in him in your Life and in your Death too, as afflicted Job resolved to do; Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: For though he kill me, yet will He do me no hurt, but turn Death it self into Gain; conquering it as an Enemy, pulling out its Sting, and doing me Good by it, and after it.

Trust God with your Selves, and with your Children too; it may be you have little or nothing to leave them, well, leave them to him that hath enough, and hath taken them into Covenant with himself, promising to be not only your God, but likewise the God of your Seed.

Trust him with his own Interest, and Name, and Glory; for you may be sure he will carefully look after it, and powerfully maintain it, and will not see himself a loser in the End; but in those Things in which the Enemy deals proudly, He will shew himself to be above them; making their Wrath to Praise him and

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restraining the Remainder of it. *His Counsel shall stand, and the Thoughts of his Heart to all Generations, and he will fulfill all his Pleasure; and He is still going on and on toward it, losing neither Ground nor Time. And though there are and will be, as long as there are any Devils in Hell, and Papists upon Earth, and ungodly wicked Men, many Letts of Opposition; yet there shall not be one Lett of Impediment, not any that shall obstruct his Work, or hinder its progress, before him every Mountain shall be levell'd into a Plain.*

Trust him with this and the Neighbour Nations, upon whom He hath shewn himself wonderful, for whom He hath done great Things in former Times, as our Fathers have told us; yea, annd in our Days too, and thereby hath got himself a glorious Name which He will not lose. No, no, England! He that hath been thy God hitherto is so still, do not thou forsake him, and He will not forsake thee.

Trust God with his Churches, I mean the Reformed Churches, for they are his; Rome was so once, but she hath forsaken her first Love, and is become a filthy Whore, and hath upon her such foul Spots, as are not the Spots of Gods People. She is to be destroyed, the Thing is so certain, that the Scripture
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speaks of it as done already, Rev. 18. 2. Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen; and fall it shall, what is now a Prophecy shall be turned into an History, for strong is the Lord God that judgeth her.

But it is otherwise with the lovely and faithful Spouse of Christ, who is a Garden inclosed. Her Redeemer is mighty, who will beautifie her with Salvation. No Weapon that is formed against her shall prosper, but be blunted, yea, broken. She is built upon a Rock, that of Ages, of Eternity, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against Her. She is indeed frequently afflicted, tossed with Tempests, and not comforted, but notwithstanding she shall be preserved, Her Sufferings, though many and great have issued in her Advantage: Like the Palm, under weights, she hath grown. Hence that comfortable Observation long before any of us were Born. Sanguis Martyrum, semen Ecclesiæ, The Blood of the Martyrs, is the Seed of the Church. A potent and merciless Enemy is risen up to be flagellum Dei, a scourge to the World, and to the Flock of Jesus. For many Tears together He hath pursued them with a Rage that reacheth up to Heaven, yet unto this Day he is not Master of his End; after the Desolations he hath made, the thinning of his Subjects, the Ruine of numerous Families,
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the impoverishing of his Countrey, there is yet in his own Dominions a Seed to serve him, which shall be for a Generation. Now indeed his Arm is strengthen'd, and a vastly great Addition is made unto his Power, and there is at present little Appearance or likelihood of any Thing but a cruel and bloody War, yet fear not, but stand still, and see the Salvation of the Lord. There is a great Cry gone up from his brutish, barbarous Cruelties, and from the Protestants unparallel'd Sufferings, and surely it is entred into the Ears of the Lord of Hosts, and the higher He now is, the nearer and greater may be his fall. I have often said, and now I say it again, Besides those necessary Means which are to be made use of for their Preservation and Defence, let the People of God do the Duty of their Day and Place, let them Honour God, credit Religion, and Love one another; and then as for their Enemies, let them do these Three Things, Believe them down, and Pray them down, and Live them down, and for certain they shall see them tumble, for they have Sins enough of their own to sink them into Destruction. Thus, Christians, do you live by Faith, and do it thoroughly, considering that you have but a little Time to live so. Do you glorifie God by believing, and you shall find that He will glorifie himself by work-

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working; do but you Conquer the Sins that are among you, that you may not offend and lose your best Friend, and then you shall not become a Prey to the Enemies that are against you. No, no, though they have done great Things, and think to do greater, be ye glad and rejoice, for the Lord will have his turn, and do great Things too; yea, he will both out-do them, and un-do them.

There are only Two Things more which I would heartily Commend to you, and they are these. Since you have a God, whose Thoughts concerning you are so exceeding Gracious, and deserve to be highly esteemed by you, and accounted exceeding Precious. Be you careful to maintain and keep up a close Communion with him, and study the most exact and curious Imitation of him. Let your Life here be a walking with God, and a following of him, for both these do become you, as dear Children.

First, Maintain and keep up a Communion with God, this hath been the Practice, the Desire, the Endeavour, and the Delight of all real Saints in their several Generations: I have told you in the following Discourse that Enoch walked with God, and so did Noah, when all Flesh had corrupted their Way; and so did the rest, being all animated and acted by the same Spirit. John also the
be-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

beloved Disciple of our Lord invited others into Communion with them, and for their Encouragement told them, that their Fellowship was with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Now do you follow their Example, and tread in their Steps; for you cannot possibly have a better, and more faithful Friend, nor a sweeter and more comfortable Companion. You will never be with him, but by Means thereof you will get something more of him, and grow into a greater Similitude and Likeness to him. It is Gods Condescension to walk with Man, who is Dust and Ashes, How low is that stoop! It is the Advancement of Man, his Priviledge and Honour to walk with God. This will greatly improve you; when Moses had been Forty Days in the Mount with God, he brought down with him from thence such a Beauty and Glory as made his Face to shine. Further, this initial Communion with God here, will be a singular and effectual Means for the preparing and qualifying you for that Communion with him hereafter, which will be intimate, compleat, undisturbed, and Eternal. The Enjoyment of that is, I doubt not, the Matter of your present Hope, and in that Hope you greatly Rejoice. Therefore begin it now, and continue it, and get as much of it as you can while you are in the Way.

You

The Epistle Dedicatory.

You that are Young, and in the Morning of your Age, begin your Acquaintance with God betimes; Remember your Creator in the Days of your Youth; that what is Vanity in the most, may be Piety in you, and you that are Elder, grow up in this Communion, and labour for a greater Intimacy, than yet you have attained to. O my dear Friends, while others have Fellowship with Devils, and the unfruitful Works of Darkeness, which will issue in Shame, and end in Death; let God be your choice, be with him as often and as much as you can, at Home and Abroad, alone and in Company, in Ordinances and Duties, and out of them too. In this way Heaven will be render'd more pleasant and delightful to you, and you more welcome to Heaven; since at your Departure hence, you will only change your Place, and not your Company. When Enoch had walked with God, then God took him, and in the same Manner will he deal with you; when you have here sought his Face, you shall hereafter behold his Glory: And when you have here walked in his Way, you shall then enter into his Joy and Rest, and be for ever in the Bosom of his Love.

Secondly, Study an Imitation of God, Man was at his first Creation made in the
like-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

likeness of his great Creator, his Image was then instampt upon him, and that was his Glory; but Sin came and defaced that Image, and so Man lost his Primitive Glory, and instead of being like his Maker became like the Beasts that perish, and worse too: But God is graciously pleased by his Spirit to repair that loss, and to restore that Image unto some of the Children of Men; beg therefore that this may be done upon you, and that you may be changed into it more and more, for that will be from Glory to Glory. This is very much insisted upon, and called for in the Scripture. Be ye Holy, for I am Holy; there is the Reason, and sure that is sufficient. Be ye Holy, as I am Holy, that is the Pattern, and for certain there cannot be a better. Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect; there is the Degree or Measure which should be in our Eye and Aim, an as of similitude, so as to resemble him; though not an as of equality, so as to equal him. Be ye followers of God as dear Children, though you cannot get up to him, follow him as well, and get as near him as ever you can. Shew forth the Virtues of him, who hath called you out of Darkness into his marvellous Light. Tread in the steps of Christ, shine with the Beams of Christ, express his Disposition, lead his
Conver-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Conversation, and as you have it, in 1 John
4. 17. As He was, so be ye in this World.
Your Holiness and Happiness, both in Time,
and to Eternity, is the unfeigned Desire of

Your Souls Friend and Servant

From my Study in
Winchester-
street, London
Aug. 14. 1701.

Samuel Slater.

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THE
PRECIOUSNESS
OF
God's Thoughts
Concerning his People.

PSALM CXXXIX. xvii.

*How precious are thy Thoughts unto
me, O God!*

AS there is great Variety and vast Difference in Things, some are Good, some are Bad, and among them that are Good, some have only a lower Degree of goodness, and others an Higher. So there is in the Judgments and Esteem of Men. Some prize, commend, and applaud one Thing, and some are as great Admirers of another. Men of the World set their Hearts upon the Things of the World, are its Votaries and Admirers, Blessing themselves in the Enjoyment of them, as if they were large enough to fill the Capacity of their Souls,

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and to silence their craving Desires. How eager therefore are they in the pursuit of them? Hence that loud Cry, *Psalms 4. 6. Who will shew us any good?* Meaning thereby Corn and Wine, and how greatly pleased are they in the Enjoyment? Hence that foolish and ridiculous Lullaby, *Soul take thine ease, for thou hast Goods laid up for many Years*: Though at that very Time he was without God in the World, having his Heart quite empty of Grace, and his Head void of saving Knowledge; yet since his Harvest had been great, and his Barns were full, he looked no further, but concludes He had now attained, and his Happiness was compleat.

Whereas an Holy and Heaven-born Soul, that hath had a Divine Light breaking in upon his Understanding, and a blessed renovating Change made in his Heart and Affections; doth not take up his Rest in things below, but is upon the Wing; and Flies a more lofty Pitch. He being fully convinced that that *God*, who is the Spring, Source, and Fountain of all that Goodness, which is scattered up and down among the Creatures, is himself, and cannot but be the best and chiefest Good; and accordingly He sets the highest estimate upon him, hath and would have his Affections moving and working toward him with the greatest Vigour and Strength, and doth most of all please and delight himself in Meditations of him, *Psalms 104. 34. My Meditation of him shall be sweet.* God himself, and any thing of God, is the Delight of a Saint. His Beams are pleasant to behold, his Shadow comfortable to sit under, and his Fruit is sweet. The Truths of God, the Ordinances of God, the gracious Discoveries and Communications of

God

God, carry along with them to one of such a Temper, a singular and incomparable Excellency and Deliciousness. *David* pray'd, that *God* would lift up the Light of his Countenance upon him; that Prayer was heard and fulfill'd, the Thing was done; and what followed upon it? Read *Psalms* 4. *Thou hast put gladness in my Heart*; that is well; where there were damps and dumps, sighs and sobs before there is gladness now; but what measure of Gladness is there? To what degree doth it arise? O! saith He, *There is more gladness in my Heart, than in the Time, when their Corn and Wine increased.* The Smiles of God did more revive him, than the greatest Vintage, and most plentiful Harvest, could the hungry and craving Worldling; yea, the very Thoughts of God, are of the same Nature and Tendency, and produce the like Effect, so the Holy Prophet speaks in the Text.

How precious are thy Thoughts unto me, O God!

The Question here will be, what Thoughts of God are those which the Psalmist doth here mean? I Answer, some understand those Thoughts which *David* had of *God*. So *Piscator* doth, &c. and certainly becoming Thoughts of God, such as are Holy and Honourable, cannot but be exceeding welcome, grateful and pleasant, to them that truly Love him; a Rich Worldling is not more pleas'd with his Houses, Bags, and Mannours, nor an ambitious Man with his Preferments and swelling Titles of Honour, nor a voluptuous Man with the Thoughts of his Pleasures, than a Person truly gracious is with the Thoughts of his God. These are the

Food that nourish his Graces, these the Dainties that Feast his Comforts. As we may gather from *Psalms* 63. 5, 6. *My Soul shall be satisfied as with Marrow and Fatness, and my Mouth shall Praise thee with joyful Lips, when I remember thee upon my Bed, and meditate upon thee in the Night watches.*

But I rather choose to understand here those Thoughts which *God* himself had concerning *David*, and others of the Sons and Daughters of Men, whom He hath set his Heart upon. Those, all those Thoughts, which thou hast been graciously pleas'd to reveal in thy Word; Thoughts of Peace, of Good and not of Evil, and by which I judge of all the rest, which thou dost yet conceal, and keep lockt up in thine own Breast; the Contrivances of thine Infinite Wisdom, the Designs of thy matchless Love, the Purposes of thy glorious Grace. They are all precious to me, and so they are to all thine; though *how* precious they are in themselves and unto me, I am not able to express! I know not how to tell others, nay, *Lord*, I am not able to tell thee. How much soever thy Self and thy Thoughts are neglected and slighted by others, by a Company of Vain, Foolish and Absurd Wretches, yet they are exceeding precious to me; I value them more than all the World, though I know I do not value them according to their worth. When I come to Heaven I shall know them better than now I do, and when I know them better I shall prize them more. I shall Eternally value them, yet I shall to Eternity fall short. For as they are exceeding precious, so they are no less numerous. *If I should count them, they are more in number than the Sand.* The Doctrine which from hence I

observe, and shall insist upon will be this.

DOCT. *The Thoughts of God are very precious to all those that are truly gracious.* In the Prosecution hereof, I shall follow this Method.

First, Enquire what these Thoughts of God are.

Secondly, Shew, that they must needs be precious to such Persons.

Thirdly, Wherein their preciousness doth consist.

Fourthly, Why they are so precious to the Saints.

Fifthly, Improve the Doctrine in a way of Use. We begin with the first of these, *viz.* To enquire what we are to understand by the Thoughts of God. To which I Answer in these two Things.

First, I understand those Thoughts which God hath of his People.

Secondly, Those Thoughts which God hath for his People. The Former of which plainly shew the Value and Esteem which God hath of them, and the Latter speak the Kindness and Good-will He bears to them; the Designs which He hath laid and is carrying on, and will accomplish in their Season and Order. All of them infinitely above their deservings, all the blessed Fruits and Products of his free and rich Grace in Christ, and all of them worthy of himself: We have all the Reason that can be to cry, *Grace! Grace! to them.*

First, We may understand those Thoughts which God hath of his People; which shew that great

Price and Value He sets upon them. He hath very low and mean Thoughts of graceless wicked Men, though not too low, they being altogether as little in their real worth as they are in Gods Account; as vile in their own Natures and Actions as they are in his Eyes. The Heart is, or at least it should be, the best and noblest Part of Man, there should be a large Stock and Treasury of good Things both new and old. And many Men do talk very much of, and bear as much upon the goodness of their Hearts, as if, when all the rest is rotten, still that kept sound; and though they cannot but confess the irregularity of their Walkings, and the disorders of their Lives, they thank God they have as good Hearts as any in the World. But what are the Thoughts which God hath of them? What the Judgment which He passeth upon them who is best able to do it, for He searches them, and knows them better than the owner himself; and the Account which in his Word He gives of it upon that search is this, *Prov. 10. 20. The Heart of the Wicked is little worth*, nay indeed, it is nothing worth, it is not worth taking off from a Dunghill; and therefore He rejects them, as what He will have nothing to do with, that his Mind cannot be toward; *Psalms 119. 119. Thou puttest away all the Wicked of the Earth like dross*. They will not pass with God, no more than bad Money will with Men; Clipp'd Money indeed may be taken, and hath been, though it want much of its due Weight; but for all that, when brought to the Touch-stone it is found of the right Kind, but no Understanding Persons will take Copper-Money in Case they knew it to be such. Though the Saints themselves are very

defe-

defective, and fall exceeding short of that Measure and Degree unto which they should aspire and industriously press; so Holy Paul was free and ready to acknowledge, that *He had not attained, neither was already perfect*; yet they find a most gracious Acceptance with God, and pass for Current because Right in the main, they are Gold, whereas though wicked Men are curiously gilded, and seem to the Eye very fair and lovely; yet God puts them away because He knoweth them to be no other than dross, reprobate Silver.

And after the same Manner, He treats all they do, He had not any respect to *Cain nor to his Offering*. *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. 15. 8. And so is his Incense too, be it of what Composition, it will it stinks in his Nostrils. And let us seriously think with our selves, how sad it must needs be with a Man, when the Great and Holy God is pleased, neither with his Person, nor with any thing that He doth. *Antiochus* was by many called *Epiphanes*, noble, illustrious, but the Spirit of God threw Dirt upon that Glory, and stiled him *a vile Person*, Dan. 11. 21.

But now God hath high and honourable Thoughts of his People, though they be mean and contemptible in the Eyes of others, accounted no other than the Refuse and Off-scouring of the World; yet *they are precious in his sight and Honourable, and He loves them*, Isa. 43. 4. This doth evidently, and beyond all Contradiction, appear by those Names which He is pleased to give them in his Word, calling them his Jewels, his peculiar Treasure, his Portion, his Inheritance, a Royal Diadem in his Hand, yea his Glo-

ry. It is the Lord Jesus as well as David, that spake those Words in *Psalm 16. 2, 3. O my Soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord, my Goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the Saints that are in the Earth, and to the Excellent, in whom is all my Delight.* Sit down, I beseech you a while, and consider with your selves, how great and amazing it is for Christ, who is the Lord of Glory, the brightness of his Fathers Glory, unto whom the Father hath committed all Judgement, to call his poor People, *the Excellent*; and to place in them all the Delight which he takes in this lower World. Without all peradventure this may very well be Matter as of highest Wonder, so of sweetest Comfort, that our ever blessed God and Saviour should have such Thoughts as these of his poor People, and accordingly of their Services; being held in the Galleries, with the Beauties of their Holiness, as one that knew not how to stir, and ravished with the piercing Eye of their Faith, and the rich Chain of their Graces, and delighted with the Voice of their Prayers and Praises; counting that his delightful Musick, which they look upon as no better than the Chattering of a Crane. These Thoughts deserve to be esteemed Precious.

Secondly, *We are hereby to understand those Thoughts which God hath for his People.* Which do all carry in them Riches of Grace, dearness of Love, and singular Kindness; and by these I mean, the ever to be admired Contrivances of his Wisdom, and the fixed Resolutions of his Heart from all Eternity. Those *Counsels of his Will* and Holy Purposes, which having once had a being shall never have an End, but in an actual and compleat Accomplishment; since they are
 immove-

immoveable and unalterable. And here let us spend a little Time in considering these Three Things, which I shall briefly touch.

First, *The extensiveness of the Thoughts of God.* How vastly comprehensive they are, and how far they reach, and what a Compass they fetch. He is thoughtful for them, and for all that is their's. Satan is God's Everlasting Enemy, he hates him with an implacable hatred, and envies him, and would not in the least contribute to his Honour; yet he could not but own in Job 1. 10. *That God made an Hedge about Job, and about his House, and about all that he had on every side, and blessed the Work of his Hands, so that his Substance was increased in the Land.* There are many Things which we poor Creatures forget, this slips us, and that, and sometimes Matter of Moment, but our God thinks of every thing, even the least, *Isa. 49. 16. I have graven thee upon the Palms of my Hands, thy Walls are continually before me.*

Secondly, *Consider the great Condescension that there is in these Thoughts of God.* How low he stoops, and doth, as it were, lay by his Majesty, that He may take up and shew forth Love and Care: He looks to their little Things, the smallest and meanest of them, such as we should not count worth the regarding. Thus he bottles *their Tears* that not one of them may be lost, and He numbers *their Hairs*, that not one of them shall fall off from their Heads in Vain, or without his Notice; then when the Three Children had been cast into the fiery Furnace, and for sometime walking there, it was found at their coming out that the Hairs of their Heads had not been singed, nor had the smell of the
Fire

Fire passed upon their Garments, and then

Thirdly, *Consider how high God riseth in these his Thoughts for his People, and truly they are far above us, and out of our reach. We cannot while we are here, not till we put off these Mortal Bodies, and are taken up to Heaven; nay probably, when we come and are seated upon those Everlasting Hills, we shall not there neither take the height of God's Thoughts for his Children. No, no, they will even then and there be the Objects of our Admiration, but beyond our Comprehension; too many for us to number, too high for us to reach, too big for us too grasp. Indeed, God knoweth them himself, He knoweth them all, and that perfectly: And it is a singular Delight to him, his Pleasure and Everlasting Satisfaction; and accordingly He speaks of it, Jer. 29. 11. I know the Thoughts which I think toward you. You do not know them, and therefore your Faith is so little, and your Comforts so low; but I know them, and am so pleas'd with them, that I will not alter them, nor can I add to them. But it is altogether impossible for us, or any other meer Creature to know them fully; such Knowledge is too wonderful for us. But those that we do know are great and glorious, and by them we may judge of the rest, and say as David doth in the Text. How precious are thy Thoughts unto me, O God! Now here let us consider God under a Threefold Notion, as being*

1. A Creator.
2. A Governour.
3. A Redeemer.

Thoughts concerning his People. 11

1. *The Thoughts of God as Creator are precious,* and they deserve to be so. That it should be in his Heart to call you out of nothing into Being, and to bestow upon you so excellent a Being as He hath done: Had He pleas'd, He could have placed you among those that are the meanest and most despicable, the brut Beasts that perish; yea, and have made you some of the most odious and loathsome of them, as Dogs, or Serpents, or Toads. But He hath made you Men and Women, some of the highest Rank and Order of Creatures in this Inferiour World; but a little lower than the Angels, who are the Courtiers of Heaven, standing always before the glorious Throne of their great Lord, and delighting themselves in the beholding of his Face. How exact and curious hath He been in the Formation of your Bodies! Of this our Kingly Prophet doth in this *Psalms* take particular Notice, *verse 14. I am wonderfully made; and, verse 15. I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest Parts of the Earth.* It is a most admirable Piece of Embroidery. Man is called a *Microcosme*, or little World; and indeed He is no less than a World of Wonders. We are frequently taken with, and stand admiring of some of the Works of Men. This Limning, and that Architecture, and a great many more: But the Work of God in the Body of Man doth far excel them all, for there is a noble and stately Fabrick, where there is nothing defective, nothing redundant, nothing vain or superfluous: But a great Variety of Members, all in their right Shape, proper Position and due Proportion, and all adapted to the several Uses for which they were by the Divine Infinite Wisdom designed.

How

How wonderfully (as may be by you, and hath been observ'd by Learned Men) compos'd of Bones, Sinews, Cartilages, of Muscles, Flesh, and Skin, the Veins and Arteries interwoven, and carried through the whole for the Conveyance of Blood and Spirits to all the Members of it; together with a great Diversity of Colours, one of the Hair, another of the Eyes, another of the Cheeks, another of the Lips, which render the whole very amiable, and put upon it a pleasing and attractive Beauty.

But the goodness of God doth specially manifest its self *in the Soul of Man*, which He hath indued and furnished with those Three excellent and noble Faculties or Powers: Namely, the *Understanding*, and the *Will*, and the *Affections*, giving him the Light of Reason to direct his Way, and Knowledge to guide his Choice, and to steer his Course so as to arrive in the end at the Port of Happiness; so that while the lower Creatures are fit for nothing but meaner Services, and lower Enjoyments, the Comforts of Sense, Man is in a Capacity of serving his God, and bringing Glory to him, capable of having and maintaining close and intimate Communion with him, sweet and delightful Enjoyment of him both here and hereafter, in Time and to Eternity.

These Thoughts of God should be very precious to us, and they likewise ought to be very influential and powerful upon us; and the good Lord grant, that they may be so in such away, and to such Purposes as these. *Shall I wickedly defile that which God hath so wonderfully made? Shall I destroy and ruine that which He hath so curiously wrought? Hath God given me such a Body as is*

fit

fit to be a Temple of the Holy Ghost, and shall I make it a sink of Sin, and a Cage of unclean Lusts, and a receptacle of Devils? My Members may and should be Servants to Righteousness unto Holiness, and shall I so far dishonour them as to yield them Servants to Uncleaness, and to Iniquity unto Iniquity? Hath God given me Reason, and shall I walk contrary to the Principles and Dictates thereof, so degenerating into a Brute? Hath God given me a precious and immortal Soul, commanding me to work out its Salvation with fear and trembling, and shall I live in the shameful neglect of it, working out its Damnation with Joy and Jollity, fulfilling the Wills of the Flesh? Am I capable of enjoying God, and Heaven, and all the Felicities of the other World, and shall I be totally carnal, drown'd in Sense, taken up with the sorry Enjoyments here below, the fading, deceiving Vanities of the World, and the Pleasures of Sin that are but for a Season! O my Soul, how unworthy is this of a Man, how contrary to the End of my Creation, how cross to my main and Everlasting Interest!

Secondly, There are those Thoughts which God hath as He is the great, Supreme Rector or Governor of the World, and these likewise are precious. As that his Government should not be altogether Arbitrary and Uncertain, as some of the great Ones of the Earth would fain, and with all their Hearts have theirs to be; but his is by a Law, a stated, permanent, and Eternal Law, sufficiently known unto them that are his Subjects, it having been at the first Written in the Heart of Man by the Finger of God. Indeed, beside the natural, moral Law, which shall never be abrogated, but of Everlasting Duration and Obligation; there was a positive Law given

ven out to our first Parents, but that was but One, and that one not grievous but facil and easie to be kept; viz. to keep from eating the Fruit of one Tree, which was in the Garden of *Eden* upon Pain of Death; when a free and full Liberty was granted to him of eating of any or all the rest, at any Time, and in any Measure, when, and as He pleased. And as touching the *Moral Law*, which was connate with him, and in legible Characters ingraven upon his Heart; it was fit for so glorious a Majesty as God to give, and so excellent a Creature as Man to obey, not any one of its Precepts being hard and burdensome, but all of them *Holy*, and *Just*, and *Good*; all within the reach and compass of his Power, so that he might easily have fulfilled them, and that with chearfulness and Delight; all of them being Consonant and agreeable to his Nature, as He came out of the Hand of God. There was no such thing as unreasonableness or difficulty in the Law of God, no such thing as impotency, averfeness or backwardness in the Heart of Man. All the Commandments were and are *Holy*, if we consider the Nature of them; and all of them *Just* if we consider the reasonableness of them, and all of them *Good* if we consider the End of them; which was the Honour and Glory of God, together with the Peace, welfare, present Comfort, Future and Eternal Happinefs of Man. But then,

Thirdly, *Let us consider God as He is Redeemer*, and his Thoughts as such cannot but be exceeding precious: For Man being so curiously formed by the Divine Hand, and put into such a state of Blessedness and Honour, ruled by and obliged to the strict Observation of so reason-
ble

ble and excellent a Law, for which He had sufficient Power given him from above; did notwithstanding transgress it upon the Motion of his Wife, who had been first beguiled by the Serpent and the Devil in it; and thereby displeas'd his Sovereign Lord, fell from his first Estate, lost his Happiness, and ruin'd himself, and not only himself, but all his Posterity together, who were in his Loins. *But though Man had thus foolishly destroyed himself, yet in God was his help.* And when He and all the Angels in Heaven would have been at an Utter and Eternal Loss, had they united their Counsels and set themselves to find out a way for his Relief; God himself, who is Infinite in Wisdom, and can at no Time and in no Case be at a Loss, was pleas'd to engage in the Work, to pitty his lapsed and undone Creature, and to *repair the marr'd Girdle, and make up again the broken Pot-sherds.* His Thoughts then were Thoughts of Mercy and Compassion, of healing and raising. Now for the help of your Understandings and Memories, I shall divide these Thoughts of God into these Particulars. God's Thoughts were.

1. Thoughts of Salvation, to deliver Man out of that Ruin which He had brought upon himself.
2. Thoughts of Reparation, and making up that dreadful loss which Man had sustained.
3. Thoughts of Restauration unto that from which He had fallen, setting of the broken Bone, and the Bankrupt up again.
4. Thoughts of confirming and fixing him in that State unto which He should be raised, that He might not fall a second Time.
5. Thoughts

6. Thoughts of Exaltation and Preferment, the advancing of him to a better, and surer State than that was which He fell from; and certainly there is the highest Reason that can be for us to say the same with *David* in the Text, *How precious are thy Thoughts unto me, O God!* For the better recommending them to us, I shall a little insist upon them.

First, *Here are the Thoughts of God concerning Man's Salvation.* *Adam* had at one stroke ruin'd himself, and all that were to descend from him in the ordinary Way of Generation. He ran upon that Rock, which He knew would split him. He knowingly did eat rank Poyson, which did immediately taint and infect the whole Mass of his Blood. In a Word, in the Face of a peremptory Threatning, He desperately ventur'd upon the Transgression of the Positive Law; and thereby brought upon himself a Curse, and became liable to Death, the worst of Death, all sorts of Death, both Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal. But saith God, here is a Company of these poor Creatures that I will have Mercy upon, and extend Favour and Kindness to, though they do not deserve it, yet I will shew it freely; the Bowels of my Compassion do Work and yearn over them, my repentings are kindled together, for I am God and not Man: Though my Threatning be gone forth, yet I will remember Mercy; and as the World shall feel that I am Righteous, so they shall find that I am Gracious; and know how to Pardon as well as to Punish. They have indeed provoked me unto Wrath, but I will not stir up all my Wrath, nor will I execute the fierceness of it. So much shall

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break out as will Praise me, and shew how much I am an Enemy to Sin, and how much I stand upon mine Honour, but the remainder of it I will restrain. The Devil hath shewn himself an Enemy to me and my Creatures, and had he had his Will, I should not have an Angel in Heaven to serve me, nor a Man on Earth to enjoy me; but I will see that He shall not be fully the Master of his End, his Expectation shall be in great Measure disappointed, *The Seed of the Woman shall break the Serpent's Head.*

Though these have lost themselves, I will have them sought by him who is infinitely Wise, and saved by him who is mighty to save. Though they have brought Ruine upon themselves, I will take Care that their utter and final Ruine shall be prevented. They shall smart for their Sin, and know and feel their Sorrow, that it was an evil thing and bitter, that they have forsaken and disobeyed me, and that my Fear was not before their Eyes; but they shall not Die for it, they shall not be Damned for it. Though the threatening be gone out of my Mouth, and the Sentence past; yet *as to these*, I will prevent and stop the Execution. Though they be greatly fallen, fallen from their Primitive Rectitude, Beauty and Glory, from their Holiness and Happiness, fallen from their Enjoyment of me, and Communion with me; yet they shall not fall irrecoverably, not into the bottomless Pit, not into the lowest Abyss of Misery, from whence there is no return. No, no, *I will deliver them from going down thither, for I have found a Ransome for them*, Job 33. 24. Let him be punished, saith the Law, for He is a Transgressor. Let him be damned, saith strict Justice, for He hath

deserved it. Let him have his Place and Portion together with us, say the Devils, for He is become like one of us. Let him be scorched in our Flames, who hath brought so much Fuel to the Fire; no, saith Mercy, I will yet save him.

Now certainly, these Thoughts concerning our Salvation deserve to be precious in our Account, they were a delight to God himself, and to the Son of God; though he knew how chargeable that Salvation would be, and how much it would stand him in, *Prov. 8. 28, 29, 30, 31. When he established the Clouds above, when He strengthened the Fountains of the deep; when He gave to the Sea his Decree, that the Waters should not pass his Commandment, when He appointed the Foundations of the Earth. Then I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his Delight, rejoicing always before him.* Now observe what follows, *rejoicing in the habitable Part of the Earth, and my Delights were with the Sons of Men.* But how could He delight in the Sons of Men? What Pleasure could He take in them? None as they were Apostate sinful and fallen Creatures, none as they were miserable, ruin'd, and undone; none as they were become Enemies to him and Rebels against him. This woful Alteration in them, this degeneracy made the Lord repent that He had made Man, and it grieved him at the very Heart. But it delighted him to think that for all that He should save him, and that He should so much baffle the Devil in his grand Design; and not only that Man should be saved, but that it should be brought to pass in such a stupendous and unthought-of Way, in such a Way as would amaze and astonish the whole World.

World, both Angels and Men, and raise in them Eternal Admirings both of the greatness of his Wisdom, and the Riches of his Grace. This did afford unto God our Saviour not only one single, short and transient delight, but a great and permanent one; there is in this one thing, a Composition of Delights; and therefore He speaks of it in the Plural Number, my *Delights* were among the Sons of Men; this one thing did afford him many and great Delights: He delighted in it often and often before He took unto him our Nature, and when He was manifested in the Flesh; and since too, yea, it will be the Matter of Everlasting Delight; and since these Thoughts have been, and are so pleasant to God, they may well be precious to us.

Secondly, *There are the Thoughts of God concerning Mans Reparation.* Sin had brought most dreadful Ruine upon Man, but God had it in his Heart to raise him again out of those Ruines; Man at his first Formation was a most excellent Piece, a Vessel of Honour, but Sin came and defac'd the Beauty of it, and brake it in pieces: But the great and gracious God was resolved to set his Hand to the Work again, and to mend what Sin had marr'd, and to fit those broken Pot-sherds of the Earth for Service and Honour. In a Word, Sin defac'd the Beauty of Man and turned the *Nazarite* into an *Ethiopian*, spoil'd him of that Divine Image, which was at the first Instampt, and in which his Glory did consist. But God had it in his Heart to repair that Image again, and to draw it a fresh upon him; yea, and that in more lively and Orient Colours than before. There is a better and fairer Image of God in Christ than ever was to be seen in *Adam*

while he continued in his Primitive State, and in his highest Perfection; He that was the Eternal and only begotten Son of God, and was pleased to humble himself so much, and to condescend so far as to take unto him our Nature, was, and continueth to be *the Brightness of his Fathers Glory, and the express Image of his Person*, Heb. 1. 3. And He doth by the mighty Power of his *Eternal Spirit*, working by and with the *Everlasting Gospel*, change his People into the Image of God from Glory to Glory, 1 Cor. 3. 18. Whence we read of their putting on *the new Man, which is renewed in Knowledge after the Image of him that created him*, Col. 3. 10. It is renewed, *i. e.* it is made over again, that which was antiquated and deformed is restored to its ancient Form, Loveliness and Beauty. Thus He causeth, as the Scripture speaks, *Old Things to pass away, and all Things to become new*. This is the Work of God in Time, and a most blessed Work it is, done by Infinite and Omnipotent Grace, maugre all that mighty Opposition which is made to it from within and from without; and it is done in pursuance of Gods Eternal Thoughts, such was his gracious Purpose, and such is his glorious Performance; Rom. 8. 29. *Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate, to be conformed to the Image of his Son*; like him in his *Sufferings*, and like him in his *Spirit and Disposition*; and like him in his Honour and Advancement: For as they suffer with him, so they shall Reign with him; and as they are now Partakers of his Grace, so one Day they shall be of his Glory, sitting with him upon his Throne. And hence likewise we read, Gal. 4. 19. *Of Christs being formed in his People, they have Sin in them*;

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yea, and they have Christ in them too. Christ living and reigning in them. He is in them a Principle of Life, and by Consequence the Hope of Glory.

Now these Thoughts of God may very well be *precious* to us; for God might justly have banish'd all Mankind from him with utter loathing and abhorrency, as those whom his Mind could not be toward: Since they had lost all their Goodness and Beauty, they might have lost all his Love and Liking; since his Image which had been upon them was now quite gone, he might have said, e'en let them go too; yea, let them go into Perdition. But He hath in Wrath remembred Mercy, and his gracious Purpose and Resolution, was to renew his Image upon them; and to do it more and more, till it be compleated.

And this is that which Accents the Mercy, and renders it far more precious and worthy of Admiration; that this is not a common Mercy, nor extended unto all. God hath had these Thoughts for you, and not for many others in the World; there is a peculiar Kindness in this, it is a distinguishing Favour. How many Thousands in the World are there whom God hath past by, whom He hath left to live and die in their Sins, and in their Deformity; and to degenerate more and more, and wax worse and worse till they stink above Ground, and there is no Place but Hell fit to receive them. As one of the Apostles, Judas not Iscariot said to our Saviour, *John 14. 22. Lord, how is it, that thou wilt manifest thy self unto us, and not unto the World?* So may you say, Lord, how is it, that thou dost entertain such Thoughts? That thou hast such gracious Purpo-

ses concerning me, and not concerning others? There is such a Wise Man, but thou hast not revealed Christ to him; nor led him into the Mysteries of the Gospel. There is such a great Man, but thou puttest him off with the little Things of the World, and gives him his Portion in this Life; thou hast not had these Thoughts, this Kindness for many Princes and Nobles. How came it to pass that thou hast them for me? Surely it is not because I am better than they, or have deserved better at thine Hands; for I am a small Part of the same corrupt Mass, I brought into the World the same depraved Nature; I have been acted by the same vitious Principles, I have led the same irregular Life. Not unto me, Lord, not unto me, but unto thy Name do I give all the Glory, even so it is, Father, because it pleased thee! Therefore *Paul* hath left upon Record that humble and thankful Acknowledgment, *2 Tim. 1. 9. He hath saved us and called us with an Holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began.*

Thirdly, *There are the Thoughts of God concerning Mans Restoration. He restoreth my Soul,* said *David*, Psalm 23. 3. When the Soul is fainting he recovers it out of its Spiritual Swoons, and when it hath lost it self and gone astray, He reduceth and brings it back out of its spiritual Wanderings; when the Soul is weak, God strengthens it, and when fallen, he raiseth it. This our gracious God had from Eternity in his Thoughts to do for his People, yea, for all of them. Now here it may be asked, To what doth God restore them? To which I Answer, *not to*

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an earthly Paradise. Our first Parents were driven out of for their Sin in eating of the forbidden Fruit, and into that, neither they themselves did, nor shall any of their Posterity ever re-enter. Man being once cast out, there were *Che- rubims* placed with a flaming Sword, which turned every way to keep him out: Instead of a Paradise, or Garden of Pleasure, this World will be a Wilderness unto the Children of God while they continue in it; where they will find the Serpent hissing, Lions roaring upon them, Beasts of Prey worrying them, and Briars and Thorns wounding and tearing them,

Neither are they while here, and in their Non-age and Minority restored to *that Primitive Perfection, Beauty and Glory*, which by their Sin they had lost. But as their Infirmities, Weaknesses, Distempers, afflicting Aches and tormenting Pains remain in their Bodies, which extort from them dolorous Complaints; and are the Harbingers and Fore-runners of Death the King of Terrours, who sooner or later, when He hath received Commission will seize upon them and carry them hence. So there are remaining Imperfections, Diseases and Deformities in their Souls; a great deal of Darknes covering their Understandings, much Corruption in their Natures, refractoriness in their Wills, and disorder and inordinacy in their Affections, Flesh lusting against the Spirit, a Law in the Members warring against the Law in their Minds; and too easily, and too frequently bringing them into Captivity; and besides all these, perplexing Doubts, disquieting Fears, and dismal Apprehensions, which exceedingly imbitter Life unto them, and render it a Burden. Yet the Thoughts of God have been

for the restoring to his People, and that even in this Life these two Things, *Peace, and Blessedness*, and this may well render them precious to us.

First, *Gods Eternal Thoughts have been for restoring Peace to his People.* Peace with himself. He was fixedly resolved to have Reconciliation made between him and them. Now this Word, *Reconciliation* doth carry in it, and leads us to the Consideration of these Three Things. *First*, That there was such a blessed Time, as that therein was Love and Amity; thus it was at first, in the State Man was created, there was a perfect Harmony and compleat Agreement. No such Thing as Enmity, no Quarrel, no Jarring, not the least Discord nor Dislike; God was pleas'd with Man, and Man again was pleas'd with God. God saw his Likeness to be in Man, and Man saw his Happiness to be in God; to reconcile Persons, doth necessarily suppose a Friendship and Kindness that formerly had been between them. *Secondly*, This Word, *Reconciliation*, doth also plainly intimate to us a *Breach* that had been between them; a Quarrel, and Falling out, whatever Kindness, and Familiarity, and Intimacy, and Intercourse, and Expressions of mutual Love there had been; there was now a Distance, at which they stood from one another. Man stood at a distance from God, He was now turned an Enemy to him, was afraid of him; and did what he could to hide from him, though to do that was a Thing impossible. On the other side, God was Angry with Man and drove him out of the Garden. *Thirdly*, This Word, *Reconciliation*, speaks the healing of the Wound, and the making up of the Breach a-

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gain ; either the actual effecting of it, or the having it in Purpose and Design ; And this the Heart of God is very much set upon, and hath been so from all Everlasting. Though He is an implacable Enemy to Sin, for He cannot endure to behold it ; yet He is willing to be reconciled to Sinners, yea not only willing to be reconciled, but likewise active toward it, 2 Cor. 5. 19. *God was in Christ, reconciling the World unto himself.* This hath been the grand Plot of God, his Master Design, and his Heart hath been exceedingly set upon it, as the main, and principal Thing next to his own Glory ; and it being so much in his Heart, He was resolved to break through all Difficulties, and to stick at no Charges, it should be brought to pass whatever it stood in him. In Order thereunto, there was a Council called and held in Heaven, between *Jehovah and the Branch*, the Father and the Son ; this was the Determination, this the Agreement, this the Father purposed, and with his Purpose the Son heartily and readily complied ; that Peace should be made, that Christ should be the Maker of it. *This Man shall be the Peace*, there is none else that can, therefore He shall. He shall undertake it, and he shall accomplish it. And rather than He shall fail in the Work, He shall Die in it, and so he did ; and though He laid down his Life, He did not lose his End ; He died, but he died a Conquerour. Principalities and Powers were spoil'd, the Wall of Partition was broken down, the Enmity was slain, and *Peace was made by the Blood of his Cross*, Col. 1. 20. The Blood of Jesus was a pure Blood, having nothing of taint in it ; and a precious Blood of an inestimable Value, and a prevailing Blood, by that the Law is silenc'd

silenc'd as to it Charges and Accusations ; by it offended and provoked Justice is satisfied as to its demands. The Blood of *Jesus* is of Sovereign and most admirable Virtue, speaking better Things than the Blood of *Abel* ; a *purifying* Blood, in it is the Fountain open'd for Sin and for Uncleanness ; a *pacifying* Blood, and that both to an angry God, and a storming Conscience ; and a *purchasing* Blood, by which we enter into the holiest of all, with boldness, now by Faith and Prayer, and after Death in our Persons. In a Word, this Blood was the Happy Cement, this set Things to right again.

Secondly, *Gods Everlasting Thoughts were for the restoring of his People unto Happiness.* By the Fall we were all made sinful throughout, in the Faculties of our Souls, and in the Members of our Bodies ; and by Consequence we were made deservedly miserable throughout, both in Time and to Eternity. Therefore our gracious God, who is the great Repairer of Breaches hath had it in his Mind and Heart, to relieve his People as to both ; and to make a perfect Cure, to deliver them from their Sinfulness and Misery too ; to make them Holy and Happy. By Holiness, to qualify and fit them for Happiness, and then to put them into the actual Possession of it. In the doing hereof, he is pleas'd in Infinite Wisdom to take Time, and proceed gradually. Neither of these excellent Works is perfected here, yet both of them are begun here ; and as they are begun, so they are carried on, though in some Persons, and at some times more eminently and more sensibly than at others ; their Holiness is begun here, and so is their Happiness. The Foundation is laid by the Divine Hand, and there is a Building upon it. If

If it be asked, wherein these Consist. I Answer briefly, Their *Holiness* consists in their Conformity to God, and their *Happiness* consists in their Communion with him, and Enjoyment of him; and all these Things are begun here. In this Life they are born again from above, and of God, in this they are made Partakers of his Holiness, and of a Divine Nature: Here there is a cleansing of them from the filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, and the perfecting of their Holiness; to the doing hereof, they themselves contribute by their own repeated endeavours, which are made successful and prosperous by the powerful Concurrence of God himself, *Phil. 1. 6. Being Confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good Work in you will perform it, until the Day of Jesus Christ.*

Then as for their *Happiness*, that likewise is begun in this Life; here they have an *Interest* in God, though every one of them hath not always the Assurance of it. They all stand in a filial Relation to him, though sometimes they want the Evidence, and are not able to prove it to their own Satisfaction. A Child of Light may walk in Darkness, yea, possibly in Midnight. But there is sometimes a Beam of Light darted into them, and ravishing Joy accompanies it. *The Lord is the Portion of mine Inheritance*, said David, Psalm 16. 5. And so said Asaph, Psalm 73. 26. When He had his afflictive Exercises, *My Flesh and my Heart fails, but God is the Strength of my Heart and my Portion for ever.* Yea, and so said the distressed Church, in the midst of her bitter *Lamentations*, Chap. 3. 24. And this may be the Language, this the Comfort of all the Saints.

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And as they have an Interest in God, so while they are here they have *Communion* with him; though it be too short, too much broken, and too often interrupted. *Enoch* walked with God, and so did *Noah*, and so have all the Saints done in their several Generations. *John* was able to give this blessed Account of himself, and others of them in his Day; *John* 1. 1. *Truly our Fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* A Twofold Fellowship they had, a Fellowship of Interest, and a Fellowship of Friendship.

Yea, and more, they have their *Enjoyment* of God too; though not so full as they gladly would have it, yet so sweet as they would not upon any Terms be without it. *Cursed be the Man*, said the Noble Italian Marquess GALEACIUS, that counteth all the World worth one Hours Communion with Jesus Christ. Hear what the enamoured Spouse saith in Cant. 2. 3, 4. *As the Apple-Tree among the Trees of the Wood, so is my Beloved among the Sons. I sate down under his Shadows with great Delight, and his Fruit was sweet to my Taste: He brought me to the Banqueting House, and his Banner over me was Love.* Have not you, who are serious and gracious Christians experienced the same? Speak what you found, and as you have found. What comfortable Enjoyment have you had of God, and of your selves in God, sometimes in your Retirements; when in your Closets, could you not say, *I am not alone, for my God and Father is with me.* Sometimes in your Families, when Two or Three have been together in his Name, could you not say, *Christ was in the midst of you*; and sometimes when you have been in the Publick Assemblies, now at a Sermon speaking Comfort to you; and

and then at a *Sacrament*, sealing his Covenant and shedding abroad his Love in your Hearts. This is indeed the Happiness of a Person, to have God for his Portion, and to know that He hath so; *Psalms 144. 15. Happy is that People, whose God is the Lord.* And the more close Communion with this God any are admitted into, the fuller Enjoyment of him they are blessed with while in their Passage thorough this Wilderness, the greater must the Comfort of their Lives needs be, and the higher their Satisfaction: That is the *Third Thing* about which the Thoughts of God concerning his chosen People have been from Eternity imploied, *viz.* Their Restauration to their lost Peace and Happiness.

Fourthly, *There are the Thoughts of God concerning his Peoples Confirmation in that State of Blessedness unto which He would advance them.* He would not only raise them, but also fix them; and so prevent their falling at the same Rate a second Time. You have frequently read and heard, that Man was at the first put into a very Happy and Honourable Condition; so that he needed not to have envied the Angels themselves. They were indeed the Top of the Creation, and Man was but a little lower than they. But He was *not confirmed* in that State, He had given him a Power to stand, which He might have used if He would, and so resisted the Power, and defeated the Design of his proud and envious Enemy. But He was not above the possibility of falling. God was pleased to leave him to himself, and to the Liberty of his own Will; He might stand if he would, or fall if he would; though his Condition was good and high, yet it was not sure, but mutable; and He being thus left

left, quickly threw himself down Headlong from that height of Bliss unto which He had been raised out of nothing, into a deep Abyss of Misery and Wo, out of which He could never have been recovered by his own, or any other created Power.

This being the Fruit of Sin, and the deplorable Case of all the World; it was in the Heart of God, and Purpose to raise some out of it; and to set them up again, and to make sure Work for them. And to this End, He doth not put all into their Hands as at first he did into *Adams*, who squander'd it away, and immediately turn'd Bankrupt, but He hath put all into the Hand of Christ. *They* are in the Hand of Christ and so are safe, *all Power* is in the Hand of Christ and that upholds them; *all fulness* for their Supply is in the Hand of Christ and there it dwells. They themselves shall have something as they need, and as their Occasions require; *Grace for Grace*, some now and some anon; some helps for doing that Job of Work, some for bearing such an Affliction, and some for resisting such a Temptation; God will Supply all their Needs, and give in to them according to their several Uses; but they shall not have all at once, lest they have nothing long, their main Stock is in the Hand of Christ. There it is lodg'd, there it abides, *Col. 1. 19. It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* And God hath not only put their *Stocks* into the Hand of Christ, so that they cannot be beggar'd, but He hath likewise put their *Persons* (as I just now hinted) into the same gracious and powerful Hand, so that they cannot be lost. As our Lord Jesus Christ is trusted for them so with them,

them, with all they have and with them too ; *thine they were and thou gavest them me*, to look after them and to keep them ; this is the declared Will of the Father, that of all those he hath given his Son He should lose none, but see it forth-coming and raise it up at the Last Day, in a good Condition, and to Acceptance, so as to be found to Praise and Honour ; and this Christ understands and knows full well, and he is pleas'd with this Will of his Father, and will take all due Care to see it done, and He is able to do it : Among all other Things necessary to the Work, there is one that doth greatly fit and accomplish him for it, *viz.* the perfect Knowledge that He hath of all the Persons that are committed to his Charge, *John 10. 14. I am the good Shepherd, and know my Sheep* ; distinctly, perfectly, and as Christ thus knows them, so doth the *Father* too, who is the great Lord and Owner of them ; and He expects that every one of them should be raised up at the Last Day, carried through all Difficulties and Dangers, and brought home to his Fold and Glory. Thus God was from all Eternity firmly resolved to make sure Work for his chosen People. He did not only choose them, nor did he only order their being effectually Called, nor only take Care that they shall be washed, and justified, and sanctified, in the Name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God ; but He will also have them confirm'd and settled, brought into a good Condition and fixed in it. Angels fell, and *Adam* fell, and that was enough, God would have no more such falling.

God is resolved that his chosen People shall not fall past a recovery. *The Election obtains*, and all those

those that it obtains it will *maintain*. *Christ* builds his Church, and every Saint in it upon the *Rock*, and the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against it. Those that the Father hath given to *Christ* shall come to him, He draws them, and being drawn they come, and as they are brought in by the Divine Power, so by the same Power they are kept thorough Faith to Salvation. Fall indeed they may sometimes into Error, and sometimes into Sin, but they shall not fall into Perdition, not into Hell.

Hence it is, that God is said not only to anoint his People, but also to establish them, 2 Cor. I. 21. *He that stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us is God.* A Learned and Holy Man hath this Observation. Those Alterations which God is pleased to make, are for the better. What He made at first was very Good, but when He set his Hand to the Work again, it was better. The State of Grace in which *Saints* are, is better than the State of Nature in which *Adam* was. The new Creation is better than the old one. The new Heavens and the new Earth in which Righteousness shall dwell, will be far better than the present World that lieth in Wickedness. And as God makes *better* Work, so He makes *surer* Work; and therefore He *stablisheth* his People in Christ. He builds them, and He stablisheth them too, and to that end He builds them upon Christ, if they were built upon other Things, they might easily be prevailed against; if they were built upon Men, they would not be safe; *Adam* stood upon his own Legs and was soon tript up, the Subtilty of a Serpent, and the Fawning of a Woman gave him a fatal overthrow; if they were built upon An-

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gels they would not be safe neither, for even they in themselves are mutable Creatures; some of them, yea, a great number did fall, and others might had they not been confirmed by Grace. God chargeth them with Folly, for though there be not in them *actual* Folly, yet there is *potential*; if they were built upon any thing in the World they would not be safe, but in Danger of falling: Therefore in his Infinite Wisdom, Goodness and Love, God hath built them upon Christ, and stablished them in Christ; and now they shall stand, for *once in Christ and ever in Christ.*

Fifthly and Lastly, *There are the Thoughts of God concerning the Advancement of his People to a State of Glory at the last.* Our Saviour hath told them, though they are but a little Flock, and in their Enemies Countrey; and must expect to meet with Opposition here; and with Affliction and Tribulation: Yet He would not have them to fear, neither miscarriage by the Way, nor disappointment in the End; because it was *their Fathers good Pleasure to give them a Kingdom*, Luke 12. 32. He hath also told them, that at the Last Day, when he himself shall come in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with him; then He will sit upon the Throne of his Glory, and say unto them, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World*, Mat. 25. 34. Yea, and before too, for it was from all Eternity in the Counsel and Purpose of God to bestow it upon them. And indeed, it is altogether impossible for us (when we have raised our Thoughts to the greatest height) to conceive what this Happiness and Glory is, which the God of Love hath

laid up and reserved in the other World for them that Love him; should an Angel or glorified Saint come down from that blessed Region of Light, and Life, and Love; He could not fully describe it to us, for it is too big for Words.

That without peradventure was a blessed, sweet, and excellent Condition, in which our first Parents were put by God; and in which they continued during Innocency, but it fell unspeakably short of that which is to come. They were only in an earthly Paradise, but when the Saints have done their Work, and finished their Course, they shall be taken into an Heavenly one. In *that* there was one Tree forbidden them, but in *this* all will be their own. In *that* there was a Serpent and a Devil in it, but in *this* there shall be nothing to endanger or offend. They were but upon Earth, these shall be in the Habitation of Gods Holiness and Glory. They were to have but a Visit from God now and then, but these shall ever be with the Lord; satisfied with his likeness, and delighting themselves in the beholding of his Face in Righteousness. They had something else to do besides conversing with God, being put into the Garden to dress it, and to keep it; whereas the whole Business and Employment of Saints in Heaven will be to contemplate the Glory of God, and to speak and sing his Praise, and to delight themselves in him.

What shall I say? The Eternal Thoughts of God concerning his chosen Ones, are to raise and advance them to the utmost Degree of Perfection that they are capable of: So that there shall not be any want for them to complain, nor any further or greater Good for them to desire. All those Vessels of Honour shall be filled up to

the Brim, and have as much Grace and Glory as they can hold, and that without any fear of losing it.

What the Saints have of God here, is very sweet and pleasant to them; the smiles of his Face, the light of his Countenance puts Gladness into their Hearts: A Day in his Courts is in their Esteem, better than a Thousand in the Fens of Wickedness; but what are the Joies of Faith to the Joies of Sight? What is sitting at Christ's Feet in an Ordinance, to a sitting with him upon his Throne? That which is now, is no more to that which shall be, than a Candle is to the Sun; or a drop to the Ocean; or the first Fruits to the full Harvest; or the Morning when it just begins to dawn and open its Eye-lids is to the Sun, when he hath by unwearied Steps ascended and arrived at his Meridian height and lustre, and doth befriend this Inferiour World with his brightest Beams and most reviving Influences. Now the Saints are the Children of God, and the Heirs of God; now they have the Image of God, and the Spirit of Christ; *but it doth not yet appear what they shall be*, 1 John Chap. 3. All this that I have spoken, and abundance more than hath entred into the Heart of Man hath been in the Heart and Thought, in the Counsel and Purposes of God; and therefore no wonder, that such a Man as *David* was, breaks out into such an Expression as this in our Text, *How precious are thy Thoughts unto me, O God!* Now there are Three Things which contribute to the preciousness of these Thoughts, and render them so exceeding valuable in the Account of *David*, and such as are spirited like him. And they are,

1. The Person whose Thoughts they are.
2. The Subject Matter of the Thoughts.
3. The Persons concerned in them.

First, *Let us consider the Person whose Thoughts they are*, who it is, in whose Mind and Heart they have their Being and Abode. They are not the Thoughts of some mean, inconsiderable, and contemptible Creature; but the Thoughts of the Great, Holy, Infinite, and Unchangeable God. So we have it in the Text, *How precious are Thy Thoughts unto me, O God!* They are precious when I consider *what* they are, they are *such* Thoughts; and yet much more precious, when I consider *whose* they are, even *thine* O God! We need not much Care what Thoughts some have of us, what Judgment they have, what Sentence they pass upon us, whether it be Good or Evil, to our Honour or Reproach, because they are short-sighted, and liable to Error and Mistake; nor need we be much concerned or trouble our selves, whether they think to do us a Kindness, or a Prejudice; because their Arm is short, and their Power little. But it is a main Thing, and of highest, yea, Everlasting Importance, what a Man is in the Thoughts of God.

What did it avail *Eliab* that *Samuel* was taken with him, and said, *Surely the Lords anointed is before me?* when God immediately said, *Look not on his Countenance, nor on the height of his Stature, for I have refused him.* What did it avail the foolish Virgins, that the Wise admitted them into Communion with them, when the Bridegroom shut the Door against them, and told them, *He knew them not?*

On the other side, what though none of the Rulers

Rulers believed in Christ, the Builders rejected him; and the generality of the People could see no Form nor Comeliness in him, for which He should be desired, so long as God himself did declare by a Voice from Heaven, that He was his beloved Son, in whom He was pleased. Paul saith, 1 Cor. 4. 3, 4. *With me, it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of Mans Judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self, for I know nothing by my self, yet am I not thereby justified, He that judgeth me is the Lord.* And every Man is that which He is in Gods Rate-book.

We read in *Psalm 94. 11. The Lord knoweth the Thoughts of Men, that they are vain.* They have vain Judgments of Persons and Things, vain Opinions, vain Confidences, vain Hopes, and Expectations. Yea, there is a great deal of Vanity in the Minds and Thoughts of the wisest and best Men. Some of their Thoughts are injudicious and mistaken, others are fluttering and unstable. But the Thoughts of God are not so, but every one like himself; all of them speak his Infinite Knowledge and Wisdom, and have a Beauty and Glory in them. Hence *He always is in one Mind.* He doth not change and vary as Man doth, there is no Contradiction, nor Inconsistence in them. We cannot say, his second Thoughts are better than the first, there is nothing Mean in God. He doth indeed *think of little Things*, and Cares, and Provides for them too. A Sparrow doth not fall to the Ground without his Providence: He numbers his Peoples Hairs, and tells all their wanderings; a Tear doth not drop from their Eyes, but to prevent its being lost, He puts it into his Bottle, but He hath no *little Thoughts.*

Besides, as these are the Thoughts of an infinitely great and glorious God. So they are the Thoughts of one, upon whom we have a necessary and constant Dependance. There is no Person upon Earth, but He is a depending Creature. God is All-sufficient, but neither Man, nor Angel is self-sufficient. There is some dependance which we have upon one another upon our Fellow-Creatures, yea, upon our Inferiours; the Poor depend upon the Rich, and the Rich cannot be without the Poor, no not without your Servants; the Countrey depends upon the City, and so doth the City upon the Countrey. The People depend upon the Prince, and He full out as much upon them, *Eccles. 5. 9. The King himself is served with the Field*: One saith truly as well as wittily; not the Lion, Dragon, and Unicorn, but the Plough and the Ship are the Supporters of the Crown. But how much soever we stand in need of the Assistance, Help and Service of the Creatures, still our Main, Principal and Absolute dependance is upon God. We depend on him for our comfortable Being, yea, and for our very Being: We cannot be well without him, nay, we cannot be at all without him. If that God deny his Concurrence, Creatures can do us no Kindness, our Bread cannot nourish us, nor our Drink refresh us, nor our Cloaths warm us; and if he withdraw his Arm, none can support us, but we shall presently drop into the Grave, yea, into nothing.

Now this, all this, all the Children of God do know right well. Therefore they do, and cannot but esteem it a singular Mercy, a great and choice Priviledge to be something in the Thoughts of God. And this is their great desire

fire to know what God thinks of them, this their highest Aim, to be approved of God; 2 Cor. 5. 9. *We labour, that whether present, or absent, we may be accepted.* We are Ambitious of this, so the Greek Word signifieth; there is nothing in all the World that we bestow so many Thoughts about, that we take so much Pains for, that we set so great a value upon as Gods approving, and accepting of us. Gods approving of them, is with them more than what all the World thinks of them, as in the fore-mention'd Passage, *With me it is a very small Matter, that I should be judged of you, or of Mans Judgment.* I make as light of it as light can be, I would be useful to you; I would contribute as much as I can to your Holiness and Happiness, to your Grace and Comfort, to your spiritual Growth and Improvement: But as to what Men think or say of me, whether they advance or degrade me, whether they applaud or vilipend me; let them give the preference to *Peter* and *Apollos*, and speak disparagingly and slightly of me: I do not value it as to my self, I am neither the better for it nor the worse, I know that I shall not stand nor fall by their Sentence; He that is my Supream Judge is the *Lord*, and if I have but his Approbation, that will be enough for me.

Secondly, *Let us consider the Subject Matter of those Thoughts that are in the Mind and Heart of God concerning his People, and the Nature of them:* For their are various and different Thoughts of God according to the Variety and Difference of those Objects, about which they are exercised and imploied. Thus, there are angry, punitive and revengeful Thoughts which God hath concerning his Enemies, ungodly and wicked Men,

merciless, cruel and bloody Men, and these are dreadful. When *Shemaiah* endeavoured to persuade *Nehemiah* to go into the Temple for Safety, thereby designing to make him afraid and bring him to Sin, that they might have matter for an evil Report, and Reproach him. *Nehemiah* put up his Prayer to God, *Nehem. 6. 14. My God, think thou of Sanballat and Tobiab, according to these their Works, i. e. think so upon them as to put them to shame, so as to punish them; and so He thinks of all the other Enemies that He hath up and down in the World; they take their Swing, and gratifie their Lusts, and commit all sorts of Villany with greediness; they Curse and Swear, Drink and Whore, persecute his People, put them to exquisite Torments, shed their Blood as Water that is spilt upon the Ground, and all this while think not of God, He is not in all their Thoughts: Or if they do, they think he seeth them not, minds them not, takes no Notice; but though he lets them alone at present, his Day is coming, tho' he now saith nothing, yet He thinks the more; though He doth not pour out his Fury upon them, yet He thinks of them and of all the Evil which they do commit, and to their Cost they shall find it one Day, Psalm 50. 21. These things hast thou done and I kept silence, thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thy self, but I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine Eyes.*

There are also good and gracious Thoughts which God hath of and for his People, and these cannot choose but be sovereignly Cordial to them. This greatly pleas'd and chear'd *David* in his Distress, Psalm 40. 17. *I am Poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on me.* That was a great Support to him,

him, and it may be the like to thee, O Christian ! Let thy Case be what it will, though thou art low and despised, and thy Acquaintance and Friends do not regard nor mind thee, yet the Lord thinks of thee ; though thou art Sick and Weak, and afflicted with tormenting Pains, yet the Lord thinks of thee ; though a Mother may forget her sucking Child, yet thy God will not forget thee ; for He hath Graven thee upon the Palms of his Hands, set thee as a Seal upon his Arm and his Heart, so that thou and thy Concernments are continually before him : And there is very much in the Nature and Quality of these Thoughts of God concerning his People, which may very well commend them and render them exceeding precious in their Account : Here I shall only mention these two Things.

1. There is a *Goodness* in them, which makes them *Comfortable*.

2. There is a *Greatness* in them, which may well make them *Admirable*.

First, *The Thoughts of God concerning his People are good Thoughts.* He thinks, as was said before, good of them, and He thinks good for them. He intends and purposeth to do them good, thus He himself speaks, *Jer. 29. 11. I know the Thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, Thoughts of Peace and not of Evil, to give you an expected End.* God doth not, O Saints ! think any Evil to you, do not you think Evil of him, nor of his Providence, be not Jealous of him ; make an ingenious Interpretation. He intends nothing to you but Kindness and Advantage, and all shall in the issue and upshot be found really so, whatever it may for the present seem to be ; He intends you Peace, and you shall have

have it, the best Peace and the most lasting Peace in the midst of Trouble, and Peace without any Trouble, and He intends to answer your Expectations, to come up to them, to fulfil them, to out-do them : He will be as good to you as you hope He will, though you have it not in your own Way, you shall have it in the best Way; though you have it not at your own Time, you shall have it in the fittest Time: Though you have not the very Thing you had a Mind to, you shall have what is of great Value, *Gods Choice is always best.* The Lord is good to them that wait upon him, and to the Soul that seeks him; yea, and he will continue to be so, full out as good as they themselves would have him to be.

Your Enemies think Evil against you, and God sometimes permits them to bring their wicked Devices to pass, but at the same Time He overrules Things and turns them to good, *Gen. 45. 4, 5. Joseph said unto his Brethren, come near, I pray you unto me, and they came near, and he said, I am Joseph your Brother, whom ye Sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with your selves that ye Sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve Life.* You sent me away in your Rage and Malice that you might be rid of me, you Sold me that I might be a Slave, and that they ought to be grieved and angry with themselves for, because *it was their Sin*; but be not grieved, nor angry with your selves for that which you did, *because of the Event*, God designed good by it, and brought good out of it; He sent me before, that I might be advanced to Honour, and be an Instrument of preserving my Father and you, and the whole Family alive in this
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Time of Famine. There may be, and oftentimes is a Riddle in the *Providence*, but when it once comes to be interpreted, you shall plainly read Love in the *Design*. There is a seeming Frown upon the Work of God, but there is a real Advantage in the Purpose of God, *Deut. 8. 15, 16.* Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, who led thee through that great and terrible Wilderness, wherein were fiery Serpents, and Scorpions, and Drought, wherein there was no Water, who brought thee forth Water out of the Rock of Flint, who fed thee in the Wilderness with Manna which thy Fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, and do thee good at thy latter End. Whatever Gods dealings with his People are at first, they shall for certain End well; when he wounds them He will heal them, when he hath humbled them He will exalt them, and his carrying them through a Wilderness is in order to his bringing them unto *Canaan*: And if in such Dispensations He intends good to his People, we have Reason to conclude He doth so in giving them Sabbaths and Ordinances, the precious Gospel and Sacraments. I will shut up this Particular with that very comfortable Passage of Holy Paul, *Rom. 8. 28.* We know that all things work together for good to them that Love God, to them who are the called according to his Purpose. All Gods Thoughts and Purposes concerning his People are for their Good; and thence it comes to pass that all his Providences do contribute and work toward it.

Secondly, *The Thoughts of God concerning his People have a Greatness in them*: As there is a Goodness so a Greatness, such a Goodness and such a Greatness as doth become such a God; as they

they are precious, saith our Royal Psalmist, so more in number than the Sand; and another Holy Prophet speaking of God, brake out into these Expressions, in *Zech. 9. 17. How great is his Goodness, how great is his Beauty!* Give me leave by Goodness here, to understand that Goodness which is in God, which is Essential to him, and for ever inseparable from him, that Goodness which is the never failing Source, Spring and Fountain, from which all those Rivulets and Streams of Goodness flows, by which we are liberally supplied, and sweetly refresh'd, as the *Israelities* were by the Rock that followed them; and how great is this his Goodness, none can fully know it, but that God whose Goodness it is! there is a vast Ocean of it which knows neither Bounds nor bottom, it is infinite Goodness: And therefore to Creatures, not only Men on Earth, but Angels in Heaven altogether incomprehensible: What the Apostle saith of the *Love of Christ*, we may say of the Goodness of God, *viz.* That there are in it all Dimensions, height, and depth, and length, and breadth, and indeed it passeth Knowledge, it is beyond the reach of our Line; we cannot fathom nor grasp it: and since the Divine Goodness is incomprehensible, we may be sure it is inexhaustible; and that may very well be your Comfort, you that live upon God, live upon such a Stock as can never be spent, there is no such thing as a possibility of drawing a God dry.

By *Beauty* in that *Scripture*, I shall understand, not only that of Gods *Goodness* in General, but of that Goodness which He is pleased to express and give out in the Way of his Providence, and the several Egresses and Dispensations thereof in
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which there is great Variety, and no less excellent and taking Beauty. Sometimes indeed there seems a ruffle in Providence, a snarled Skein, and as we are apt to think a Contrariety, a Jar, a Discord, that God doth and undoth, that He is inconsistent with himself, but that his Providences run Cross to his Promises, and one Providence crosses to another: But that is our Mistake, God is unalterably and Everlastingly the same, He is in one Mind and none can turn him, and He always keeps his Way, and goes on and on toward the Accomplishment of his Design. There is a sweet and pleasant Harmony in all his Providences, a most perfect Agreement, a lovely Symmetry and just Proportion; *Psalms* 111. 3. *They are all honourable and glorious.* We shall certainly be ravished with them, when we come to understand the Mystery of them, and to look through them, and to see how they were all of a piece, and how every one did most happily contribute to the bringing about the End which God had in his Heart and Eye; viz. the Glory of his own Name, together with the Peace, Welfare and Prosperity of his Church and Children, and the Disappointment and Confusion of his Enemies, the ruine of *Babylon*, when she thinks she sits as a Queen, and is no Widow, and shall see no Sorrow; and the raising of the Tabernacle of *David* when it is fallen, and the Building up of *Zion*, and making the Place of his Feet glorious. These Things are in the Thoughts of God, and in the Womb of the Promise which is no miscarrying Womb, and the Business of Providence is to give Birth and Being to them.

That Passage is very remarkable which we have in *Psalms* 31. 19. *O how great is thy Goodness*
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which thou hast laid up them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the Sons of Men. It is all and only Goodness which He here speaks of, but there are two Parts of it, two Places and Seasons for it, for the infinitely wise God doth not give out to his People all at once. There is Goodness *laid out*, and there is Goodness *laid up*. There is Goodness express, and there is Goodness reserv'd. You have some in hand, and God hath more still in Store. That Goodness which God doth now express and lay out upon his People is great, the Cluster of Grapes is not a little one which *Israel* hath in the Wilderness, that might well encourage them to go unto the good Land. *How great is that Goodness which thou hast wrought for them, that trust in thee!* Some Read it thus, *which thou wilt work:* Thou hast wrought it, and thou wilt go on to Work; Gods Hand is in, and He will proceed. It is much that He hath done for his People already, much in Christ who was an unspeakable Gift, much in the Covenant, which is Everlasting, order'd in all Things and Sure; much in Ordinances, which are as golden Pipes for the Conveyance of spiritual Blessings to them; and much by Providence, which as a never slumbering Eye watcheth over them, and Works for them with an unwearied and never tiring Hand. He hath done much in them, and much for them; and He will do more. He hath given them some Grace, and He will give them more; so *John the Baptist* did Report, *Out of his fulness have all we received, and Grace for Grace.* He hath given them some Comfort, and He will give them more, *Isa. 29. 19. The meek shall increase their Joy in the Lord.* He hath given them some Strength,

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Strength, and He will make Additions to it, *Iſa.* 40. 31. *They that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their Strength.*

Befide this, there is Goodneſs reſerved by God, and that alſo is great. *How great is the Goodneſs which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee.* This is far beyond all that which they receive during their Minority, and while they are in their way home, and it is all laid up very ſafe. In his own *Purpoſe*, which is unalterable, and in his *Promiſes*, which are *Yea* and *Amen*, of ſure and certain Performance; and in *Chriſt*, who will not loſe the leaſt Part of it, and in *Heaven* where it is quite out of the reach of Enemies and Danger: Would you have ſome Account, what it is, take it in the Apoſtle's Words. *It is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory: A Glory that is ſubſtantial, and hath ſolidity in it. It is a weighty Glory, ſuch as doth exceed our preſent Strength to ſtand up under it, ſuch as doth exceed all our preſent Sufferings, which are but Light to it, and not worthy to be compared with it; ſuch as doth exceed all our Duties, all the Labour we are at, all the Pains we can take, ſuch a Glory as doth exceed all our Expreſſions; we cannot excogitate and invent Words big enough, high enough. Let us make uſe of the loſtieſt ſtrains of Rhetorick, and call into our Aſſiſtance one Hyperbole after another; and add to them an hundred more, we cannot reach the height of that Glory. When you, O Saints, come to be put in the actual Poſſeſſion of that which God hath laid up, when you come to behold thoſe inviſible Beauties which are for the Entertainment and Delight of glorified Eyes; when you come to Bathe and Sport your Selves*

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in those Rivers of Pleasure which are at Gods right Hand for evermore; you will not only be pleas'd and satisfied, nor only command your Souls to take up their Rest, as those with whom God hath dealt bountifully; but you will be put into an Extasie of Joy, rapt into an Amazement; while you walk up and down in those Celestial Mansions, beholding the Riches of a God, and the bounty of Divine Love; and this according to that which the Apostle tells us of, *2 Thes. 1. 7, &c. viz. The Lord Jesus being revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire, and then He shall be glorified in his Saints, and admired in all them that believe.*

Thirdly, *Let us consider the happy Objects of these Thoughts of God.* You have heard that the ever blessed God is the Author of them, in his Mind they were formed, and there they dwell; and that, as to the Subject Matter of them, they are good and great, but concerning whom are they and for whom? Who are the only Persons that shall have the Benefit and Advantage of them? *I am one of them*, said David in the Text. I am the happy Object of them, poor I, unworthy I, sinful I: Though God humbles himself when He looks upon the Things above, and casts an Eye on the glorious Angels; yet He is pleas'd to condescend so far, and stoop so low, as to think of me, who am though a King yet but a Worm, contemptible, rebellious Dust. *How precious are thy Thoughts unto me, O God!* They are precious unto me, because they are directed to me, and imploied about me. This was the earnest and only Petition, which the believing Penitent, and dying Thief upon the Cross put up to Christ. *Lord, remember me when thou comest in-*

to thy Kingdom. There are those whom thou wilt then remember, thou hast them in thy Heart now, and thou wilt carry them with thee in thine Heart into Heaven. Those that have been given thee by thy Father; those that have receiv'd and believed in thee, thine own Disciples, thine old Acquaintance, thy Friends and Followers. O that I, dear Lord, may be one of them. Lord do thou remember me, grant me a Room in thy Thoughts, when thou art seated upon thy Throne.

Now, there is never an Holy Soul, never an one that Loves God, lives to him, and walks with him; never an one that hath accepted of Christ and given himself up to him, but may rejoice and comfort himself with this, that He hath a Place and Interest in these gracious Thoughts of God. There is, I say, never a truly gracious Soul, though its Grace be very little, and its Condition very low, but God thinks of it, and the Lord Jesus thinks of it, and so doth the Holy Spirit. Yea, O Saints! they do think of you at another manner of Rate, than you think of them. You are too too forgetful of them, there are in the Scripture frequent complaints to such a Purpose; and I appeal to you, do not your own Consciences charge you herewith, that you forget both God and your selves; the Covenant that hath past between you, the Promises that have been made by you: You too much forget the Mercies which He hath multiplied, and the Duties which you should perform. But God never forgets you, though sometimes you are too ready to think he doth, and too apt to charge him with it; yet He is able to plead his own Cause, and to vindicate his own Honour, and so

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He did, *Isa. 49. 14, 15. Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Yea Zion said so, but what did God say to it, read the next Words. Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb, yea they may forget, yet will I not forget thee; behold, I have graven thee upon the Palms of my Hands, and thy Walls are continually before me.*

Obj. But it may be, O poor Soul, thou wilt be ready to cast off all Hope, and in thine unbelief to conclude thus sadly against thy self; that for certain, the most Holy and Righteous God will never have any loving and kind Thoughts of thee; because thou hast sinned so much against him as thou hast done, and been so great dishonour to him, and grief to his Spirit as thou hast been.

Ans. Unto this I Answer, Thou dost indeed deserve this at his Hands. He might justly cast thee off, and in Anger shut up from thee his tender Mercies. Yet though thy Sins have been many, and thy Provocations high; if they are bewailed Sins, if loathed Sins, if thy Heart be but upright and sincere, God will not do it. *Ephraim* had been very disobedient and rebellious, yea, and under Divine Chastisements very unruly, like a Bullock unaccustomed to the Yoke; but he afterward humbled himself, and confessed his fault and prayed; and now see, how God heard, and pittied, and answer'd, *Jer. 31. 18, 19, 20. Is Ephraim my dear Son, is he a pleasant Child, for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still. I have remembered him, the Kindness of his Youth, the Love of his Espousals, and I do remember, and will remember Him; no*

his Carriage, not his untoward Returns, but him; *My Bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have Mercy upon him saith the Lord.* Peter had dealt very unworthily with Christ, after He had been greatly, yea, everlastingly obliged to him. He denied him as one that He did not know, He repeated his denial which was a persisting in his Unkindness and Sin, and an adding Sin to Sin; yea, and he accompanied that denial with Cursing and Swearing, which was an high Aggravation thereof. Yet notwithstanding all this, when our blessed Lord rose a Conquerour over Death and Devils, He buried this dissingenuity, and unfaithfulness, and base cowardise of *Peter* in the Grave, He kept up kind and gracious Thoughts of *Peter*, and would have it known not only to him, but to all his Disciples, that still He was dear to him; and therefore in *Mark* 16. 7. When the good Women came to the Sepulchre, to see how Matters stood; He took special Care, that the Angel in his Discourse with them should make mention of *Peter* by Name *Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified, He is risen, He is not here, behold the Place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his Disciples, and PETER, that He goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, as He said unto you.* Tell *Peter* among the rest, tell him in Particular, for it will be comfortable News to him. Christ is risen and *Peter* is safe, Christ is risen and remembers *Peter*, and is perfectly reconcil'd to him; Christ is risen for *Peters* Justification. But yet further, to set out to you the exceeding preciousness of the Thoughts of God concerning his People, I shall add to what hath been already said, these following Particulars.

First, *Let us consider and take Notice of the Wisdom of God in these his Thoughts.* The Apostle in *Rom. 11.* treats of those very profound deep Mysteries of Providence, *viz.* the cutting off the natural Branches from the true Olive-tree, and the grafting into it in their stead such Branches as were wild by Nature; by which we are to understand the Rejection of the *Jews* for their unbelief, and refusal of Christ the Lord of Glory, and the calling and bringing in of the *Gentiles*; as also of the *Jews* being Converted, and brought to the Obedience of Faith at the Time appointed by God: All which Dispensations were for certain the Product and Issues of his Eternal Thoughts and Purposes concerning his Elect and chosen ones, and in the close of this Discourse, the Apostle breaks out into these Words of Admiration, *Verse 33.* *Oh the depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* There is not only Knowledge in God, but Wisdom too, these may be and sometimes are separated in Men. They have a great deal of Knowledge in several Things, and but a very little Wisdom. But both these meet together in God, and that not in a low Degree, but in the highest; there are Riches of Knowledge and Wisdom in God, and there is a depth in those Riches, such a depth as the Creatures Line is not able to Fathom.

And this Knowledge and Wisdom of God, doth appear in all Things that he doth; it mingles itself with all, it orders and manages all, it appears and shines forth in all those that have an observing Eye. Thus it is both as to his Thoughts and his Works; For, saith the Apostle, *How unsearchable are his Judgments,* by which we may understand

derstand his Purposes and Decrees, according to the *Dutch* Annotations, about the Election and Reprobation of Men, and *his Ways are past finding out*, viz. The ways of his Providence, by which He doth execute his Decrees, and bring to pass his Purposes.

The Thoughts of Men are oftentimes full of Vanity, *Psalms* 94. 11. *The Lord knoweth the Thoughts of Men, that they are Vanity.* They please themselves with this Project, and with that Contrivance, which they Promise themselves a great deal from; but in a little while see a necessity of giving it over, either because it is not feasible, or it will not turn to any good Account; either the Difficulties which stand in the Way cannot possibly be conquer'd, or else, the mastering of them will be too chargeable, and not quit cost: Whereas now all the Thoughts of God are Thoughts of Wisdom, and so in Particular are those which concern his People. Hence it is, that we read of the Counsel of his Will, *Eph.* 1. 11. *Predestinated according to the Purpose of him, who worketh all Things according to the Counsel of his own Will.* Gods Will is the Product and Effect of his Counsel, God Wills nothing rashly, nothing too soon, nothing that will be the Matter of an after-Repentance. And as God Wills so He doth, He acts all by Counsel; When He goeth about to bring to pass those things which He hath will'd, He doth it in a way of Counsel.

Thus in his Thoughts, Purposes and Will to save lost and undone Man, and to raise him out of his Ruins, that it should be such a number of them and no more, such and such Persons and no other; this is not to be quarrel'd, we ought not

to Object and Dispute against it ; for there is the Wisdom of God in it. He resolved it upon Counsel. And so it is, if we consider the way how this is to be done ; by what means Sinners should be saved, this likewise was according to the Counsel of his Will: For suppose we should grant that which some Men hold, that if God had so pleased, He might have saved Men without being at any charge at all in Order to it ; He might have crost the Book, and not required any Payment of the Debt : He might have pardoned the Offence committed, and past by the Injury done him without demanding any Satisfaction. I say, suppose it should be granted, that God needed not to have had any respect at all to the Interest and Concern of his Justice, but might have pardon'd and saved Man upon the pure and sole Account of Infinite Mercy and Sovereign Grace, yet it was his Wisdom, and the Counsel of his Will to do it in that way in which it was done. Namely, by a Mediator, by the gracious Interposition, perfect Obedience and expiatory Death of his own Son. Herein God hath acted like himself, herein He hath out-done the Wisdom of all the Angels in Heaven, for had they join'd together, had they united their Counsels, they could never have found out such a Thing as this: That the Eternal Son of God, the only begotten and dearly beloved Son, should be made Flesh, and take upon him the Nature of Man, and have all the Iniquities of all his People that had been given him by the Father laid upon him, that his precious Life should be laid down, that his Heart-blood should be shed, and his Soul made an offering for Sin, this was such a thing as could never have enter'd into their Thoughts.

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And it doth pose the Wisdom of many, who look upon themselves as the topping Men, the grand *Sopbi*, the great rational Divines; so that they do not receive and embrace the Doctrine of Satisfaction, nor that of an imputed Righteousness, professing themselves not to understand how one should be made Righteous with the Righteousness of another; and whereas the Scripture saith, *The foolishness of God is wiser than Men.* To these Persons the Wisdom of God seems no other than Foolishness, a Thing altogether unintelligible.

Yet these were the Thoughts and Contrivances of the most Holy and Ever-blessed God, this was the way for Mans recovery which the Divine Wisdom did choose and pitch upon as best; and above all others conducing to the bringing about his great and most glorious Design, which was to be true to himself, and yet good to his Creatures, to manifest his hatred of his Sin, and at the same Time his Compassion to the Sinner: So to magnifie his Mercy as not to be injurious to his Justice, and so to shew his Justice as withal to leave room enough for the displaying of his Mercy, and that his Grace might shine forth in its brightest Glory. Thus in these his Eternal Thoughts the Infinite Wisdom of God hath so dispos'd, and order'd that Man shall be saved, and yet God shall be glorified, Man shall live and God shall be no loser: None of his Attributes shall have any Cause of complaining, but the Interest of them all shall be equally secur'd, the Honour of them all equally advanced, *He is now unreproachably just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,* Rom. 3: 26.

Secondly, The preciousness of Gods Thoughts concerning his People doth shine forth in the graciousness of them. David complaining to God of his Enemies, saith in Psalm 56. 5. *All their Thoughts are against me for Evil.* Sure their Minds were very ill imploied, what a World of mischief must needs be in their Hearts, when there was so much continually in their Thoughts. Surely David was a very vile Person in their reckoning, whatever He was in Gods; they could think no good of him, since they did think nothing but evil of him: And truly as it was then, so it is now, and so it will be to the end of Time. The Enemies of the People of God do and will think Evil of them, viz. That they are no other than a Company of Hypocrites and Dissemblers, and troublesome Schismatics, contentious; like *Salamanders*, loving to live in the Fire, perverse, obstinate and ungovernable. *Ahab* look'd upon *Elijah*, that great Man for Reformation, as the great Troubler of *Israel*: And *Tertullus* charged *Paul* with being a Pestilent-fellow, and a Mover of Sedition, and the Ring-leader of a Sect; and therefore they think evil against them, as Men not fit to live, but worthy to be afflicted, oppressed, persecuted, yea, utterly extirpated. But now it is otherwise with God, who observes them more curiously, and knows them more perfectly than their Enemies, and He thinks well of them, and good for them: Could we but look into the Heart of God, and take notice of all the Motions and Workings that are there, we should see them all, having a direct tendency to, and happily working for their good. The great God hath not one evil Thought against a Child of his. He may think of proving them, and of humbling

bling them, and of emptying them; but still it is to do them good in the latter End. But of this I have spoken before, and therefore having now only thus lightly touched upon it, I pass from it to some other Things.

Thirdly, *The preciousness of Gods Thoughts concerning his People, appears in the fulness and completeness of them.* He is not Deficient, or wanting to them in any Particular, no not in the least. Zion, the Church her self is graven upon the Palms of his Hands; and not only so, but her Walls; all her Concernments are before him. We fall exceeding short in our Thoughts, and find it so afterward, and not seldom suffer by it greatly. We do not think of those Things which are our greatest Duty, nor of those which are our highest Concernments; we too often forget those things of which we ought to be most mindful, viz. our God, and our Souls, and our Eternal State. Yea, we have cause with Sorrow and Shame to acknowledge, that they never came into our Minds, *Psalms 10. 4. The Wicked through the Pride of his Countenance will not seek after God;* neither Interest in him, nor Assistance, and a Blessing from him, *God is not in all his Thoughts.*

But now the Thoughts of God are what and where they should be, there is nothing fit to be the Object of them, but it is so. There is not any one of his People but He thinks of them, and there is not any one of their Concernments but He thinks of it. When our Lord Jesus was here upon Earth in his State of Humiliation and Abasement, how thoughtful was He for his poor yet dear Disciples! And how great and constant Care did He accordingly take of them. He took them into his Family and Service, and sent them
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up and down about his Business, without Purse, and Scrip, and Shooes; but all that while He did think of them and provided for them: Therefore when upon their return He enquired of them whether they lacked any thing, they answer'd, no, nothing; they had Necessaries, they had Conveniences, there was no want. He thought of *Peter*, and of the Devil, his malicious and cruel Enemy, who desired to have him, and the rest of them, that he might sift them as Wheat; but Christ at that Time took Care of them, and had put in with his Father before hand for their Securities; *I have prayed for thee, that thy Faith fail not.* He thought of them, and what they would do when He should return unto his Father, and leave the World and them in it in the midst of Enemies, Temptations and Dangers, and thereupon he *promised to send them another Comforter, that he might abide with them for ever,* John 14. 16.

The same Care He exerciseth and the same Course He takes still, and will go on to do so. He thinks of you, and of the Work you have to do; and of the wants that pinch you, and of the Dangers that threaten you. He thinks of you, and of your Enemies too; what their Power is, what their Plots and Designs are against you; what they have done, and what they are about to do. He thinks of you when you are Well, and takes Pleasure in your Prosperity; and also, when you are Sick, and labouring under Distempers. Thus it was as to his People in General, in all their Afflictions He was afflicted; not only in some of them, but in all; not only affected, but afflicted; which speaks the dearness of his Love, the tenderness of his Heart, and
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the greatness of his Compassion. And thus it was, as to *David* in Particular, *Psalms* 31. 7. *I will be glad and rejoice in thy Mercy, for thou hast considered my Trouble, thou hast known my Soul in Adversity.* God consider'd his Trouble, he weigh'd it that it might not be too heavy for him; he consider'd all the Ingredients, that the Physick might not be too strong, nor cause the Faith nor the Spirit to fail before him that He hath made. And He knew his Soul in Adversity, when others stood at a Distance and would not know him; then God knew him, and made himself known to him. There is never a Sabbath that He affords you, but therein He thinks of you; never a Minister that He sends to Preach a Sermon to you, but He thinks of you: Never a Time that He spreads his Gospel-Table in a Sacrament, but he thinks of you, and that for Good. He thinks of every one of you, and of every thing that belongs to you. The *Devil* himself could not but acknowledg this was done in the Case of *Job*, *Job* 1. 10. *Thou hast made an Hedge about him, and about his House, and about all that He hath on every side.* This shews, that the Devils Malice extends to the Saints all; and so doth Gods care, it also speaks the value that God hath, for all that his People have. He prizeth them, and whatsoever is theirs, there is not the least Thing about them, that is forgotten by him or neglected. Since He counts their Steps, and tells their Wandrings, and numbers the very Hairs of their Heads; what is that He doth not regard? *David* in *Psalms* 57. 2. Did encourage himself in Prayer, by a thankful owning of Gods performing all Things for him. *I will cry unto God most high, who performeth all Things for me.* And since
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God performed all Things for him, He must needs think of all Things. Yea, O Saints! there is not a Day wherein God doth not think of you, nay not an Hour, nay not a Moment: He looks to you, and to all that is yours.

Thirdly, *The preciousness of God's Thoughts appears in the incomprehensibleness of them.* We are a Company of little Creatures, small drops, and shreds of Being, one remove from nothing; and our Thoughts are *like our selves*, little, low and pitiful Thoughts: Though through Grace, some of them are good, yet they are but little; whereas the Thoughts of God are great and vast, they are *like himself*; they do excellently become a God, there is a singular Beauty and Glory in them, so that He is taken with them, when He takes Notice of them: *I know the Thoughts that I think toward you*; I know them, and I know them with superlative Pleasure and Satisfaction: I see mine own goodness and greatness in them, and how I out-do all the World; *Isa. 55. 8, 9. My Thoughts are not your Thoughts*, not so mean and inconsiderable, *neither are your Ways my Ways saith the Lord*: Not so exact, not so sublime, not so glorious; you do not think like me, nor Walk and Work like me: *For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my Ways higher than your Ways, and my Thoughts than your Thoughts.* We may understand this these Two Ways, my Thoughts are higher than those Thoughts, which you have one for another; yea, and also my Thoughts are higher than those Thoughts which you have of me.

First, *My Thoughts are higher than those Thoughts which you have one for another.* You have Thoughts of Love for your Friends and Relations, Husband

bands for your Wives, and Parents for Children; but what is your Love to mine? Not so much as a Spark to a Flame, not so much as a drop to the Ocean: When your Love shall in Heaven arrive at his utmost Perfection, it will be infinitely short of mine. You have Thoughts of Pity, but what is your Pity to mine, whose Compassions do not fail? and what is the sounding of your Bowels to the Yearnings of mine? What is your Bounty to mine, who Delight in Mercy; so that the Earth is full of it, and I am never weary of extending it, but to those who are never weary of abusing it? I supply the needs of my poor Creatures according to my Riches in Glory, and give unto my People all Things richly to enjoy; and what is your Kindness to mine which is better than Life, and who have opened all my Treasures; and *shewn the Riches of my Grace, in my kindness toward you thorough Jesus Christ? Eph. 2. 7.* Do you set an high estimate upon, and greatly value your selves by your Thoughts of Mercy, and forgiveness to them who have offended, affronted, and injur'd you? But what are your Mercies to mine, and what are your Pardons to mine? You are backward to forgive, and must be drawn to it by much Intreaty, many Arguments and great Intercessions; whereas I am known to be *a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, Neh. 9. 17.* You Pardon by halves, while you pass by somethings you insist upon others; but I pardon abundantly, yea, I multiply to pardon, so that an humble Penitent shall have as many, as great, as large and full Pardons as He needs or can desire; you forgive, but many Times say, you will not forget, *manet altâ mente repostum.* But it is far

far otherwise with me, Witness the Covenant into which I have entred, *Heb. 8. 12. I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their Sins and Iniquities I will remember no more.* You take Fire presently, and are soon Angry again, and thereupon resolve and study Revenge; a new fault being committed, the Memory of the old Ones is reviv'd, and they are ript up, and now the Delinquent shall pay for all; but my Manner of dealing is to cast Sins into the depth of the Sea, and to make those that are in Grain, like Scarlet, to be as Snow, and them that are like Crimson to be as Wooll. Indeed for the good of my People I have reserved to my self a Power of visiting their Iniquities with the Rod, and their Transgressions with Stripes, and this Power I use whenever I see fit: *Yet my loving kindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail, my Covenant will I not break, nor alter the Thing that is gone out of my Lips,* Psalm 89. 33, 34.

Secondly, *My Thoughts are higher than those Thoughts which you have of me.* You that are my People indeed, have, I know, good Thoughts of me, and high Thoughts too; though others look on me as an hard Master, that Reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter; yet you perswade your selves that I intend you good, and that you shall not lose by serving of me, nor fall short and be disappointed in your Expectations from me. Yet all that you think of me is nothing, if compared with my gracious and unalterable Purposes concerning you. It is not possible for any of you at present to conceive, how pleasant those Mansions are which I have set apart for you, nor how ponderous that Glory which I design for you, nor how Orient and

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Sparkling that Crown which I have laid up for you, nor how noble that Kingdom which I have prepared, nor how rich that Inheritance which I have reserved for you. You cannot fathom the depth of that love I bear you, nor now ascend and mount up to the height of that Preferment which I intend you. *As the Heavens are higher than the Earth*, the Distance between which cannot be exactly measured by any Mortal, so are my Thoughts higher than yours; and methinks that speaks to this Purpose, which you find in Jer. 29. 11. *I know the Thoughts which I think toward you.* You do not know them, none of all the Angels in Heaven do know the *All* of them, they are too big for a Creatures grasp, Job 11. 7. *Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty to Perfection?* No, though thy search be long, and diligent, and curious, yet thou canst not to Perfection find out the Being of God or his Purposes, none but God himself doth perfectly know him, and understand all his Thoughts.

Fourthly, *The preciousness of Gods Thoughts concerning his People, doth consist in, and appear by the vast Multitude and great Variety of them.* His Thoughts were from all Everlasting, and he still continueth to think, and He will go on to do so. He tells them that he Loves them with an Everlasting Love, and how fruitful of Thoughts will such a Love be. He that Loves his Friend, Loves to Study his Interest, and to be contriving for his Good. A Person that really Loves God, Loves and Delights to think of him; and when his Thoughts are rambling and running out to other Things, his endeavour is to reduce and bring them again to God as to their most proper Ob-

Object, and there He would gladly fix them. For He is never so well, his Mind is never so much at ease, nor his Heart so much delighted as when it is so. O saith our Holy and Royal Prophet, *Psalms 104. 34. My Meditation of him shall be sweet.* It had been often so, and he knew it would be always so; and He saith in the verse immediately after the Text, *when I awake I am still with thee.* Every Morning I arise, and every Night I go to Bed I am with thee; thou art with me by thy Providence, and I am with thee by my Holy Thoughts. And must it not needs be much more so with God, whose Love to his People is infinitely greater than theirs to him, who loved first, and who loveth best, having set them as a Seal upon his Arm, yea, upon his very Heart; What saith *David* here of these Thoughts, *How great is the sum of them!* in the former Words he admired them for their Value, and in these for their Number: And He might well ask the Question, *How great is the Sum of them?* Because he himself could not tell, it was beyond his Arithmetick, and therefore he added in *verse 18. If I should count them, they are more in number than the Sand.* Know, O *David*, that is too great and hard a work for thee, or any other Creature to undertake. Go not about to count the Thoughts of God, entertain thy self with Meditations upon them as often as thou canst, the oftner the better; delight in them as much as thou wilt, for they are pleasant for Delights. Rejoice in them all the Day, and every Day; but do not think of counting them, they are too many for thee, being more than the Sand; *Quæ nec mensurari potest, nec numerari*, which can neither be measur'd, nor number'd. If thou shouldest attempt it, thou wilt

wilt hardly know where to begin, and thou wilt never know where to make an End.

And much to the same Purpose He had spoken before, in *Psalms* 40. 5. *Many, O Lord my God; are the wonderful Works which thou hast done, and thy Thoughts which are to us-ward; they cannot be reckon'd up in Order unto thee, if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.* This is such a Thing as cannot be done, namely, by Man, by a Creature; there is not only a great Difficulty in it, but an utter impossibility. These Thoughts are many already; and yet God is continually adding to them. He thinks of his People with a great deal of Pleasure, and accordingly He goeth on to think.

And indeed what would quickly become of us, if God should give over thinking of us; if he should resolve to forget us for the Time to come, and to entertain no more kind and gracious Thoughts concerning us, we should certainly be undone. *Zion* Thought so, when in the bitterness of her Soul she cried out, *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me.* Alas! All our thinking, and studying, and contriving, all our caring, and carking for our selves would not avail us, but be altogether fruitless and insignificant.

But God still thinks of us, though we deal very disingenuously and unworthily with him, though we have hard and unbecoming Thoughts of him, and the Dispensations of his Providence; and though we are ready with *Jonah* to run from our Duty, and to quarrel with him for the Acts of his Mercy, and to break out into Passion for the withering of a sorry Goard; yet God remembered him, *When He was gone down to the Bottoms*

of the Mountains, and the Earth with her Bars was about him, then did his Prayer come unto him into his Temple, and he brought up his Life from Corruption. Take another notable and famous Instance of this, which you may find in *Psalm 73*. That Holy Man *Asaph* had been for sometime furiously assaulted, and batter'd by a violent Temptation, grounded upon his own and repeated Exercises, together with the Prosperity and flourishing Condition of ungodly Men; and this Temptation did too much prevail against him, He was almost overcome by it; being ready to say, in *verse 13*. *Verily, I have cleansed my Heart in vain, and washed my Hands in Innocency*: and so to disparage God and Godliness, and throw Dirt in the Face of Religion: But upon a serious Reflection, and the Divine Spirit seasonably interposing, taking fast hold of him, and preventing his being utterly cast down, he recovered, got up on his Feet again, humbled him, and with the deepest self-abasing confess his fault, *verse 22*. *So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a Beast before thee*. Or as the Margin of your Bibles tells you, it is in the Original, *I was as a Beast with thee*; like a Beast in my Thoughts and Carriage, but now Mark what he saith in *verse 23*. *Nevertheless I am continually with thee, thou hast holden me by my right Hand*: Though I was as a Beast, yet I was with thee. Yea, continually with thee, even at that Time, and in that Fit with thee: When I was ready to cast Religion off, thou didst not cast me off. When I had Brutish Thoughts of thee, thou didst continue thy gracious Thoughts of me. Think of this, O ye his Saints! What was the Happiness of Holy *Asaph*, is your Happiness also: You are continually with God, always

ways the Objects of his fatherly Love, always under the Eye of his watchful Care, and the securing Wing of his powerful Providence.

Fifthly, *The preciousness of Gods Thoughts concerning his People, doth consist and appear in the Harmony and Sweet Consent of them.* Our Thoughts very frequently are ruffled, cross and at War among themselves; they come crowding into our Minds, and are jostling one against another. We are off and on, it is but seldom that we are long of one Mind. Sometime this Thing pleaseth us, and we resolve upon it, but then comes another, and turns the former quite out of Doors; who for a Time but *Tamar!* Her Brother *Amnon* was sick of Love for Her, but no sooner had he his Will of Her, but he sends her packing with utmost Detestation. Whereas there is no such Jarring, no such Inconsistence and Contrariety in the Thoughts of God; for they are all agreed, they do not in or about any one Particular, Fall out, nor Quarrel, nor Thwart one another. As there is a perfect Harmony among the Divine Attributes, so there is among the Divine Thoughts.

The Divine Attributes may, and do seem to us contrary to one another, as Justice and Mercy, we are apt to think they stand in one anothers Way; but it is no such Matter, there is no need of reconciling them: For they do not contend, but happily agree, they meet and kiss each other. When Justice must do its Work, and execute Judgment upon a resolved, obstinate, and impenitent Sinner; Mercy doth no longer interpose, it pleads no more, speaks not a Word further on his behalf, but delivers up the Criminal, that the Law may have its Course;

and Justice its full blow. And on the other side, if at any Time, and upon any Person, Divine Mercy thinks good to magnifie it self; what though it be a bloody *Manasseh*, or a persecuting *Saul*, Justice complies, raises no Objections against things, laies no Rubs, nor Obstacles in the way. Nay in such a Case, Justice doth not only comply and consent; but likewise it most chearfully Concurs to the Thing, and hath an Hand in the Work: For, as I have already said, the Wisdom of God hath been so admirable in its Contrivances, and in its laying the whole Scene of Affairs; that these Two can walk Friendly, and Hand in Hand throughout the whole. Thus in *Rom. 3 26*. God is said to be *Just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*. To justify Believers (who notwithstanding their believing, are Sinners both by Nature and Life) is an Act of special Mercy and rich Grace, and yet in the doing thereof God is unreprovably Just; and so we meet with a Passage of a like Import, in *1 John 1. 9*. *If we confess our Sins, He is just and faithful to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness*. Here now is Grace in its Meridian heighth, Grace in its Glory; this will be to all the Angels and Saints in Heaven, the Matter of their Eternal Praises and Admirings: And yet Justice approves of it, and most freely Consents to it, and hath an Hand in it; upon the Account of his Covenant and Promise He is *faithful* in doing, for thereby he makes his Word good, yea and he is *just* too.

After the same Manner there is a sweet Concord, a most excellent and perfect Harmony in all the Thoughts of God concerning his People, *Job 23. 13*. *He is in one Mind, and who can turn*

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him. Though He hath a Multitude of Thoughts, yet He hath but one Mind. Though He hath a great Variety of Thoughts, yet He doth never vary nor change his Mind; His Mind is one and the same, like himself, without variableness or shadow of turning: And so are his Purposes and Decrees which are the Dictates of his Wisdom, and the fixed resolves of his Will. He chooseth and stands to his choice, He loveth and rests in his Love; He giveth liberally and upbraideth not, He giveth liberally and repenteth not.

We may, speaking of God after the Manner of Men, humbly divide or distinguish his Thoughts concerning his People, into these two Sorts or Ranks. *First*, His Thoughts concerning that most blessed and glorious Estate unto which He will advance them, after they have finished the Race which they had to run, and the Work which was given them to do; and those are his Thoughts about the *End*: And then there are his Thoughts concerning the Way, by which He will bring them to that End; and these are his Thoughts concerning the *Means*. Thus it was in his dealings with his first and ancient People, the Children of *Israel*, and Seed of *Abraham* his Friend: Gods Thoughts were to bring them to rest in *Canaan*, a land flowing with Milk and Honey; and then in what way he would bring them thither, *viz.* through a waste and howling Wilderness. So it is with the spiritual Seed of *Abraham*, Gods first Thoughts are to glorifie himself, and to get himself an Everlasting Name, by the saving of some of the Children of Men, and bringing them to Heaven, that Land of Light, and Life, and Love, and making them there completely and everlastingly Happy in Communion

with him, and Enjoyment of him. And besides, He hath other Thoughts about the Way, how this shall be effected and brought to pass; and so he resolved in himself to leave Men to themselves, and to suffer them to fall from that State of Holiness, Happiness and Honour in which they were Created, into a State of Sin and Misery: That so the Fatigues and Dangers of the Wilderness might the more commend to them the Land of Promise, where they may go to a City of Habitation: And that such a State of Sin and Misery might the more commend Heaven to them, and the undisturbed rest which is to be had there: The Penury and Wants with which they are here frequently pinched, will be as a Foil to set off that fulness of Joy which is in the Presence of God; and those Pleasures which are at his right Hand for evermore. For as Health and Ease is most sweet and pleasant to them that have laboured under tedious Sickness and tormenting Pain; so will Heaven, and the Happiness thereof be unto all those who have by sad and long Experience known, what it is to be conflicting with powerful Corruptions within, and with violent Temptations from without, beside the Fear and Sense of Divine Displeasure. Oh how wonderfully will they be transported with Joy! What a Rapture will they be put into? What Melody will they make in their Hallelujahs, when they once come into Heaven, the Seat of the Blessed, who have had an Hell within them? Further, Gods Thoughts have been of giving them a Right and Title to Heaven, who had forfeited all the good Things they had upon Earth; and could not lay claim to a Crumb of Bread, nor a drop of Water, and in order hereunto He parted with his

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only and dearly beloved Son out of his Bosom, and sent him into the World to die for them, to be made Sin for them, a Sacrifice and Curse for them, to satisfy Justice, to pay their Debts, to fulfil all Righteousness, and to purchase for them an Inheritance above, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. And again, his Thoughts have been about the bringing of them into a fitness for Heaven, and making them meet to partake of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; that as Heaven is a prepared Place, so they may be a prepared People; that so Heaven may not be weary of them, nor they weary of Heaven. Hence there is a gracious Change, absolutely necessary in Order to that glorious Change; for this blessed End and Purpose, He is pleased to send his Holy Spirit for the meliorating and refining of their Natures; the subduing and purging out their Corruptions, and the sanctifying of their Hearts, and to conform them to Christ, to which He did predestinate; for this End he hath provided and appointed Ordinances for them, the Word and Sacraments, by which they may be brought home to Christ, and to God by him, and built up in him, increas'd, improv'd, and nourished to Eternal Life: And that He might in nothing be wanting to them, He provides Physick for them as well as Food, ordering out Afflictions for the taking away of their Sins, and making them further Partakers of his Holiness. Thus you see that all the Thoughts of God concerning his People do most sweetly agree, they are all of a Piece, all of them do Concur and Contribute to the same End, they all do Work together for their Good.

Seventhly, *The preciousness of Gods Thoughts concerning his People, doth consist in, and appear by the fixedness of them.* We poor Creatures are off and on, our Minds and Thoughts are fluttering and unstable; we are greatly pleas'd with them to Day, and do no less dislike them upon the Morrow. Now we resolve upon this or that as highly rational, and making evidently for our own Particular Interest, or the Publick Good; but upon a second or third serious Review, we reject those Resolutions as being very foolish and absurd. Afflicted and then disconsolate *Job* bitterly complained, in *Job* 17. 11. *That his Purposes were broken off, even the Thoughts of his Heart.* And this was not his Case alone, but usual and common to the Children of Men, and this doth several Ways come to pass. Sometimes *God* breaks Mens Purposes off, he orders out some Cross Providence in the way to the Thing purposed, which the Person concerned cannot possibly get over, and sometimes *Men* break off their own Purposes. Many under checks of Conscience, startling Sermons, fears of Hell, purpose to repent and reform, and to lead a new and better Life than they did before; but Sin comes with a fresh Motion, and claps a faster hold upon them, and they change their Minds, and their Purposes of Reformation vanish into nothing. So that they continue what they were before, and for the most part grow much worse. Sometimes Sickness, and Losses, and Charges in our Condition break them off; we Purpose in one Condition, but then we are brought into another, and so are render'd incapable of performing that which we had purposed. Once more, when *Death* comes, it will most certainly break all our Purposes.

ses. Some Purpose to do this and the other for the World, and others to do this and that for their Souls; but Death comes upon them unexpectedly, and so all is broken off: Therefore though it is good for Men and Women to have good Purposes, yet it is not good to take up with them: Let Performance immediately follow good Purposes, and Action tread upon the Heels of Holy Resolution. *David shewed his Wisdom in making haste, and not delaying his Duty, Psalm 119. 60.*

But now the Thoughts of God are firm and stable, and his Purposes shall never be broken off, neither can they be; *Job 23. 13, 14. He is in one Mind, and who can turn him: And what his Soul desireth, even that he doth, for he performeth the Thing that is appointed for me, and many such Things are with him.* God is unsearchable in his Essence and Nature, His Name is *I AM*, what he was from Eternity, that he is now; and what he is now, that he will be to Eternity: The Heavens wax Old as a Garment, and shall be changed as a Vesture, but He is the same. Do but make sure of an Interest in God, and then you have a fast Friend, and a Portion for ever. And as He himself is the same, so is his Mind, that is one; his Purposes are the same, his Decrees the same. None can turn him, He can easily turn Man, the stoutest, the strongest, and most resolved, even a *Sennacherib* himself, *Isa. 39. 29. Because thy Rage against me, and thy Tumult is come up into mine Ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy Nose, and my Bridle in thy Lips, and I will turn thee back in the way which thou camest.* But all the Men on Earth, and Angels in Heaven cannot turn God; He ever is consistent with

with himself, not changing through *Folly* as they do who mistake themselves, nor through *Weakness* as they do who are not able to do what they intended. His Thoughts always look the same Way, and He is still going on, and on, to his designed End; altogether incapable of being diverted, or stopt by Strength of Argument, or Force of Arms. But *that which his Soul desireth*, that which he is pleased withal that he doth; He Wills it, and Effects it; it is done at that very Time, and in that very Way in which He wills it. But *Job* goeth on, *He performeth the Thing that is appointed for me*, viz. in his Eternal Counsel and Decree: All that comes upon us, both our Comforts and Crosses, our Sweets and Bitters are by the Appointment of God: And, saith He, *Many such Things are with him*, i. e. many such Appointments, and they shall all come to pass. Though there be never so many Irons in the Fire, none of them shall cool; be the Divine Appointments ever so numerous, there is not one of them shall fail: And all this doth proceed and flow from the immutability of God, who is, as the Apostle *James* saith, *James 1. 17. Without any variableness or shadow of turning*. God, as Dr. *Manton* saith upon the Place, and all that is in God is unchangeable. His Wisdom is so, and his Holiness, and his Righteousness, and his Mercy, that endures for ever; and his Love, for he loves his People with an Everlasting Love. And so are his Counsels and Decrees, *Mutat Sententiam*, saith *Bradwardin*, *non decretum*. He sometimes changes and alters his Promise, as that made to *Eli* concerning his House; and sometimes He alters and doth not execute his Threatning, as that which He denounced

nounced against *Nineveh*, as to its Destruction within Forty Days. But he doth never alter his Decrees. That his Name is *I am*, was the support and comfort of *Israel* in *Egypt*; and this may well, O Saints! be your Comfort too, whatever Changes there are up and down in the World, in Kingdoms and Nations, and whatever Changes there are in Men; Acquaintance grow strange, and Friends turn Enemies; whatever Changes there are in your Spirits, and in your Conditions, still there are no Changes in God, and therein lies your Security and Comfort, *Mal. 3. 6. I the Lord change not, therefore ye Sons of Jacob are not consumed*: And therefore ye humble, penitent, and believing Sinners are not condemned. But to all this that hath been said, I shall add one Thing more.

Eighthly, *The preciousness of the Thoughts of God concerning his People, doth consist and appear in the Efficacy of them.* They shall all be brought into Act, as they are fixed and immutable, *Prov. 19. 21. There are many devices in the Heart of Man, but the Counsel of the Lord shall stand.* Yea, it shall, when all is done against it that can be done, therefore let us not sink at this Day. I have read, that Holy *Miconius*, upon a view of the Churches Enemies, in a Letter to *Calvin* had this Expression, *Gandeo quod Christus Dominus est, alioqui totus desperassem.* I am glad that Christ is King, for otherwise I had been utterly out of Heart and Hope. But let our Faith be strong, for his Throne is sure, and his Thoughts stand to all Generations, to the end of Time, to the utmost of Eternity; and He hath assur'd us, that *He will fulfil all his Pleasure.* His Eternal Purposes concerning his chosen ones are his Pleasure, and afford

afford him an unspeakable Delight, and He will fulfil them all; be of good Cheer therefore, O Saints! study the Scriptures, that Book of Books, acquaint your selves well with the Covenant of Grace, and the exceeding great and precious Promises of the Gospel, and know that every one of them shall be fulfilled; let Earth and Hell combine and arm, and do their worst, though Heaven and Earth shall pass away, yet not one *Iota* or Tittle of these shall fall to the Ground, or short of its Accomplishment.

Indeed, if you look upon your selves, and consider your own weakness; how unable you are to make good your Ground, and to bear up against the Opposition and Temptations, which you have Reason to expect in your Passage thorough the World: Or if you consider, how much you have offended God and provoked him; and how justly he might withdraw his Influences and Assistances from you, and become your Enemy, and Fight against you; your Spirits may well fail, and your Hearts even Die within you; but God, even your God, in his Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, hath made you safe for Eternity, 2 *Tim.* 2. 19. *Hymeneus* and *Philetus* had erred concerning the Truth, and by their Suggestions overthrown the Faith of some; thus it was then, and may we not with sadness say, even so it is in these our Days? Many Professors are corrupted in their Judgments, having drunk in damnable Heresies; many are drawn into Sin and flagitious Practices by overpowering Temptations, and not a few are so desperately fallen away, that it is impossible for them to be renewed again unto Repentance; but there the Apostle tells us (and blessed be God that

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He could tell us so) that *nevertheless*, notwithstanding the Errors of some, and the Weakness, and Defection of others ; *The Foundation of God standeth sure, having this Seal, the Lord knoweth who are his*. Believers stand upon a firm Foundation, the Eternal Purpose of Election. God hath loved them, and in his Love he hath chosen and set them apart for himself ; and this Foundation is sure, it will out-last Rocks and Mountains, which shall depart and be removed ; but this cannot be stirr'd nor shaken, for it is the *Foundation of God* ; he hath laid it himself, and since he hath laid it, He will maintain it. The Foundation shall stand, because God will stand to it : And it is *seal'd*, so that there is an utter impossibility of its being alter'd ; and the Seal is this, *the Lord knoweth who are his* : He knows them with a Knowledge of Intuition, a distinguishing Knowledge, He knows every one of them, and that in a Croud or Throng of others. He knew one gracious *Lot* in a vile City, and one righteous *Noah* in a wicked World ; and He knows them with a Knowledge of *Approbation*. He highly approves of what he himself hath done, *viz.* his choosing them, and setting them apart for himself, and for Life and Happiness, and to obtain Salvation ; he likes what he hath done herein, that it shall never be undone again, and by Consequence he doth approve of them. Thus He had respect to *Abel*, yea, and to his Offering.

And now we may rest fully assured of this, that these Thoughts of God shall certainly take Place, and that the Divine Love, which is the Spring, Source and Original of them will not be baffled, nor defeated ; but will effect its gracious Purposes, and bring to pass all its Designs. Though there

there be Mountains in the way, and those great and high ones; yet know to your Comfort, that this Divine Love is accompanied with Divine Power, and they both are Infinite, and where these two meet there can be no such Thing as an impossibility; nay, every Difficulty doth vanish and disappear: This Love goeth on triumphantly in its way, leaping upon Mountains, and skipping over Hills; yea, it doth with ease level the Mountains, and make them to become a Plain, *Zech. 4. 7.*

There are indeed in our Eyes and Apprehensions a great many Difficulties, such as we should count and call insuperable: Many without, and many within, such as would pose the Wisdom, and non-plus the Power of an Angel; yea, of all the Angels in Heaven. But the Work is in the Hand of a God, and his Arm is sufficient for him; and by that, all these Difficulties shall be overcome, and with Joy be it spoken; many, yea, the hardest of all are overcome already, *viz.* The satisfying of a violated Law, and of offended, provoked, Justice; and all the rest shall be so too, every one in its Season. I will briefly Instance in a few Things, and by them you may judge of the rest.

1. The old Man is a great hindrance in the way of our Welfare, but this hath been already crucified with Christ; and so it is likewise in all them that are Effectually Called, and it shall be more and more mortified, till at length it shall Die, and be no more. So that it shall not hinder the Perfection of their Grace, nor the brightness of their Glory.

2. The Gates of Hell, notwithstanding all their Policy and Power shall not prevail against
you,

you; but notwithstanding your Weakness, thro' Power given into you from above, you shall stand your Ground, and prevail against them, and be more than Conquerors through him that loved you; in the Time of most violent Temptation, there shall be a necessary support, and a way to escape, and Satan himself shall be bruised under your Feet.

3. My dear Friends, I most earnestly desire you to consider seriously of it, that there were a great many Difficulties in the way of your Salvation; it was difficult to reconcile Justice and Mercy, so that they should meet and kiss each other. But God found out a way, so that this was done, Christ should Die, and by means of that, Sinners should Live; the Chastisement of their Peace should be upon him, and by his Stripes they should be healed. He should stand in the Room, and suffer in their stead, and be offer'd up a Sacrifice for them; hereby offended Justice shall be satisfied, and all its demands answer'd, and thereupon a free and open way shall be made for Mercy to shew, and magnifie it self: My own Son, in whom all fulness dwells, shall pay the whole of that Debt which they had contracted; and then, saith God, I will give them a full discharge.

4. But, Lord, He is thine own and only Son; the dearly beloved of thy Soul, the brightness of thy Glory, and the express Image of thy Person; how canst thou find in thy Heart to part with him, and to expose him to such heavy and grievous Sufferings, as He must necessarily undergo in order hereunto? This we may rationally conclude to be a great Difficulty, but however God did overcome it; *Rom. 8. 32. He spared not his*
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own Son, but delivered him up for us all. Yea, and more than so, *Isa. 53. 10.* It pleased the Lord to bruise him, the Sacrifice of Christ was in the Nostrils of God, a Sacrifice of a sweet Saviour.

5. But when this was done, and the Work carried on thus far; it is a very difficult Thing to prevail with Sinners to accept of Christ, to remove their averseness from him. There is such Pride in their Hearts, that they are not willing to be beholden to him for Righteousness, and such reigning Sin in their Natures, that they are not willing to bow to his Sceptre, nor come under his Government. But God hath been pleased to resolve upon the overcoming of this Difficulty too, and to that Purpose he makes bare his Almighty Arm, and puts forth such a Strength as bears down all the Resistance that the foolish Sinner makes, *Psalms 110. 3.* *Thy People shall be willing in the Day of thy Power.* They must indeed be drawn before they will stir, but when God doth draw them, he doth it so strongly that they cannot but come, and withal He doth it so sweetly that they come with a good Will; they come running, as those that think they cannot make haste enough, nor get to Christ soon enough, but count every Day a Year, *Cant. 1. 4.* *Draw me, we will run after thee.*

6. But such an one is an old Sinner, he hath grown Gray in his wickedness; he hath not only a corrupt Nature, but been for a long Time accustomed to Sin; and that is a second Nature, and an *Ethiopian* may as soon change his Skin, and the Leopard his Spots, as one that is accustomed to do Evil, learn to do Well. He is double-dyed, a Sinner in Grain. He hath lain rotting in his Lust like a dead Carcass in its Grave. *Yet O*

Death

Death God will be thy Plague, O Grave be will be thy Destruction, Hof. 13. 14. He hath; and will again say to such an one, *Sinner come forth; The Dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall Live,* John 5. 25.

7. But these poor Creatures after they have found Mercy, and been reduced from their Wanderings, will be ready to backslide and run away from God again: But saith God, as to those that are indeed mine, I will take Care as to that, the Election doth obtain; those that I have chosen shall be called, and that so Effectually that they shall come, and what the Election doth obtain it shall maintain. Therefore God enters into such a Covenant as is Everlasting, order'd in all things and sure, in which He hath undertaken and engaged for both sides, for himself and for his People too, *Jer. 32. 40. For himself, I will not turn away from them to do them good: And for his People too, I will put my fear in their Hearts, that they shall not depart from me; i. e. They shall not so depart as totally and finally to forsake me, not so depart from me, as never to return unto me again.* And as for those backslidings which they may be guilty of, through the Prevalency of Corruption and Temptations; I have provided as to them too, the backsliding shall be pardon'd, and the Backslider shall be reduc'd, *Hof. 4. 4. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; yea, and dearly for all that, small Matters shall not Part us; no, nor great ones neither.*

8. But they will meet with much and great Opposition in their Way, they cannot get to their own Country without passing through this Wilderness, where the Lion will be roaring,

and the Serpent hissing, and the Adder biting at the Heel; there are Enemies within, and Enemies without, all malicious, mischievous, vigilant, potent, active, to disturb, to divert; yea, to destroy, but God will deliver them from all, and carry them thorough all; their own Arm will not save them, therefore they shall be kept by the Power of God thorough Faith to Salvation. Those Passages of our dear Saviour are sovereignly Cordial, *John 10. 48, 49. I give unto them Eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any Man pluck them out of mine Hand: My Father, who gave them me is greater than all, and no Man is able to pluck them out of my Fathers Hand: And as no Man can do it, so neither can any Devil.*

It is true the Scripture saith, *The Righteous are scarcely saved*, 1 Pet. 4. 18. But however they shall be saved, and so it be done, it is no Matter though it be scarcely done: For that Word *scarcely* speaks only the Difficulty in doing, but no Defect in the Thing when it is done; though they be scarcely saved, yet they are compleatly saved. There is nothing that shall keep his People from him, though his Sheep be scatter'd abroad; though they be wandred very far, yet he will seek them out, and bring them into his Fold, and God will for nothing cast any of his People off; *Rom. 11. 2. God hath not cast away his People, which he foreknew.* And as He hath not done it hitherto, so He never will; there is nothing that shall separate them from his Love, nothing that shall shut them out of his Kingdom. God hath set his Heart upon it to make them Happy, and bring them to Glory, and it shall be done. He hath blessed them, and they shall be blessed.

He himself will never recal the Blessing, and neither his, nor their greatest Enemies shall ever be able to hinder the Operation of it.

Thus I have in many Particulars largely shewn you, wherein the Preciousness of God's Thoughts concerning his People doth consist and appear, and I heartily wish that these Things may return so frequently, and work so powerfully, as to render that God precious to you, whose Thoughts they are. And now there is only one Question more, which I have to speak to, before we come to the Uses. And that is, What Reason is there, why these Thoughts of God should be so precious to a *David*, to the Saints of God? Why should they set so high a value and estimate upon them? Unto this Question, I shall return an Answer in these Two Things.

First, There is great Reason for that, *Because they are the Objects about which these Thoughts are imploied, and exercised, they the Happy Persons who are principally, if not solely concerned.* They only are the Objects of Gods special and gracious Promises, they are the Heirs of Promise, and of all the good that is contained in it. *There are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises,* saith the Apostle Peter; they are given to us, exclusive to us, and not to others, as *Philip* said to our Saviour. *How is it, Lord, that thou wilt manifest thy self unto us, and not unto the World;* there is a singular sweetness in distinguishing Mercies. Christ a Saviour to me, and not to others; Promises made to me, and not to others; Oh how did the Holy Prophet Pray and Plead, that in these pleasant Places his Lines might fall to him, *Psalms 106. 4, &c. Remember me with the Favour, which thou bearest to thy People: That I*
G 2 *may*

may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy Nation, that I may Glory with thine Inheritance. All those Blessings and good Things put together, which lie in common and are promiscuously; and, as it were, with a careless Hand given out to the Children of Men are very small and inconsiderable, if they be compared with these Specialities. Those are but common Pebbles, these are the Jewels with which God adorns his Spouse, and decks his Children.

Now as all the precious Promises of God are made to them, so in like manner all the gracious Thoughts of God are exercised about them. As for others he saith, *Cast them out of my sight, my Mind cannot be toward them*; but his Mind fixeth upon these, *Isa. 66. 2. To this Man I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and that trembleth at my Word.* I do look to such an one, yea, and I love to do so; I will look off from others, that I might look to him: And we may say the same as to his Thoughts, he is willing to forget others that he might remember him, and not to think of others that he may of him. Here that comes to my Mind which Holy Mr. Fox said of a good Woman, that was Mean and Poor in the World, and desired him to have her in his Thoughts. O, said He, *I forget Lords and Ladies to think of such an one as you are.* So it is with the great and ever-blessed God. He doth not regard any of the great Ones of the World, the Topping and Bulky Men, the Sophies and Grandees, in Comparifon of an humble and Holy Soul, *Jer. 29. 11. I know the Thoughts which I think toward you.* His Heart is toward them, and so are his Thoughts, which make upon his Mind a deep, and abiding Impression. He

thinks

thinks of them, and then reflects upon those his Thoughts with infinite Delight. This David knew full well, and rejoiced in the Knowledge of it. *How many are thy Thoughts to usward,* Psalm 40. 5. A Multitude of them to usward, which do meet in us as so many Lines in the Center. So in our Text, *How precious are thy Thoughts unto me, O God!* Thy Thoughts of me, and for me are precious. Thou didst not only call me out of nothing and give me a Being, thou hast not only made and formed me in the Womb; but ever since thou hast had Thoughts of me for my Preservation and Supply, for the Blessing of me, and doing me good.

This may very well be to you Matter of great Comfort, for it is a singular ground of Hope, and a mighty Staff in the Hand of Faith, with which you may walk comfortably through this Vale of Tears. Doth God think of us in such a Manner, and to such a Purpose, then it follows, that He loves us; and if we are the Objects of his Love, then we may be sure that he will make us the Objects of his Care, and He will be gracious to us; *Psalm 115. 12, 13. The Lord hath been mindful of us, He will bless us, He will bless the House of Israel, He will bless the House of Aaron, He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great.* Since he is mindful of all his People, He will do them good, and command a Blessing upon them, of what Rank, and Order soever they be; whether high or low, young or old, great or small. And further, Gods thinking of you, may greatly Comfort you under Mens forgetfulness and neglect; for this alone will make you an abundant amends, what though your old intimate Friends and Acquaintance have forgotten you, yet so doth not God; *Psalm*

142. 4. *I looked on my right Hand and beheld, and there was no Man that would know me, refuge failed me, no Man cared for my Soul: This was a pitiful Case, what did he do in it; He tells you in verse 5. I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said, thou art my Refuge, and my Portion in the Land of the Living.* He had none but God, and he found enough in God. A Refuge in God, there was his Security; a Portion in God, and that was to his Satisfaction. What though your nearest Relations, that are bound to you by the strictest ties of Nature, prove unnatural; yet you may Promise to your selves Kindness from him, who is not only the God of Nature, but of all Grace too. So David did, *Psalms 27. 10. When my Father and my Mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.* What shall I say? Let the Condition you are in, be never so destitute and disconsolate, this one Thing may be a Support and Cordial to you; *Psalms 40. 17. I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on me.* He knew he should not want, so long as He had a God.

Secondly, *There is great Reason, Why these gracious Thoughts of God should be exceeding precious to all the Saints, because they cannot but acknowledge themselves to be altogether unworthy of them.* As Jacob confessed that he was less than the least of God's Mercies, so may they, that they are less than the least of God's Thoughts: He had not any need to have looked out of himself, since he could not but meet with enough in himself for his Thoughts to work upon from Eternity to Eternity. Enough to have afforded to him a fullness of Delight and Satisfaction, viz. his own essential Glory, and infinite Perfections. And the Three Sacred, ever blessed Persons in the God-

head

head were, and could not but be infinitely pleased with, and delighted in themselves and one another, beholding and conversing with one another; nor could there be any Thing without them, capable of making any the least Addition to that superlative Delight, which they took in themselves and in one another; the smallest Mite to that immense Treasury of Happiness and Glory, of which they were Actually and Eternally possess. The Psalmist most humbly and readily owned and acknowledged this, *Psalm 16. 2. O my Soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, my Goodness extendeth not to thee.* Suppose it advanced to the greatest height possible, it could not reach so high as God.

Therefore it must needs be a great Condescension in God to think of Man, and if I may with all humble Reverence use the Expression; divert and take his Eye off from so infinitely a lovely and beautiful Object as himself; of contemplating whereof He can never be weary, and turn it to Man, and fix it upon him. If a Crown and Throne doth so much sublimiate and raise a Man above the common Stature of those who are otherwise his Fellow-creatures, that *Mephibosheth* said to *David*, *2 Sam. 9. 8. What is thy Servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead Dog as I am?* Certainly it did much more become *David* himself, to say to God as He did, *Psalm 8. 4. What is Man that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man that thou visitest him?* What is Man? Yes, and again propound the Question, What is Man? Surely Man is something, Yes, He is so; He is wonderfully, curiously made. He is an excellent Person; He is the Top of the Creation, the Master-piece in this Inferiour World. He is but

a little lower than the Angels, the Soul which is a part of Man is of inestimable Value, more worth than all the World; yet notwithstanding all this, and all Things else that may be said of him, the Question returns, *What is Man that God should be mindful of him?* What is there in Man that should draw out the Heart of God to him, or engage the Thoughts of God for him? It will appear, there is nothing in him that can be by us look'd upon, as meriting or deserving such a Favour at the Divine Hand, if we take a Two-fold view of him, as He is a Creature and as He is a Sinner.

First, *Let us consider Man, as He is a Creature;* and so indeed as to its Original, it is Divine, it was God that made him, and not he himself; but if we consider the Matter of which he was made, that was no other than Dust. He is a piece of Clay, moulded and made up into Humane Shape, know we not that there is an Infinite Distance between God and us. The Lord is high above all Nations, and his Glory above the Heavens, *Psalms 113. 6. Who is like unto the Lord our God who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things which are in Heaven?* It is a low stoop in God, a great Condescension for him to look to the Heavenly Host, the glorious Angels; how much lower doth the Divine Majesty stoop, when he beholds the Things that are here upon the Earth. What a vast Multitude of People do you conclude there are in this City, when at a *Lord-Mayors Shew*, you see the Windows, Belconies, and Leads filled, and the Streets Crouded and Throng'd: But how much more would you be amazed, if you should see all the Inhabitants of *England* meet together in one Place;

Place; but what a sight will there be at the Last and Great Day, when all the World, all that ever were in it, from the first beginning of Time to the utmost Period thereof, shall upon an universal Summons appear and stand before the Tribunal of Christ, who is appointed to judge the World in Righteousness. But Alas! What are all these if they came to be compared with God? Let the Holy Prophet Answer the Question, in *Isa. 40. 15.* *Behold the Nations are as the drop of a Bucket, and are counted as the small Dust of the Balance:* And what an Ocean of Love must there be in God to be so thoughtful about a drop. Nay, the Prophet goes on and tells us, in *verse 17.* *All Nations are before him as nothing, yea, they are counted to him less than nothing, and Vanity.* One God weighs all Nations down, they all are nothing to him. And if that all Nations be so, and no more than so, what then shall we reckon the Church to be, which our Saviour calls *τὸ μικρὸν ποίμνιον*, a little little Flock; and yet further, what art thou, or what am I, or what is any one of us, that God should think of us; yea, and be so constant and kind, so gracious and curious in those his Thoughts. We are but *little in Being*, meer shreds of Being, but one remove from nothing. We are but *little in Power*, Angels are said to excel in Strength; but we are a bundle of Infirmities and Weaknesses, not sufficient of our selves to think any thing as of our selves; and if not sufficient to form a regular Holy Thought, then what is it that we are sufficient for. And we are but *little in worth*, what is our Name but the very same with that which *Jacob* called himself; namely, *less than the least of Mercies.* What do all our Duties and Services amount

mount to? Not to the earning of our Bread. Our Saviour that full well knew, how to set the Price of Things, bid us, when we have done all that is commanded us, say, *We are unprofitable Servants.* If he had suffer'd us all to perish, if he had reduc'd and sent us back into our first Nothing, if he had let us go down in our Sins to Hell, He would not have mist us; but could have raised up a bigger World of better Persons, who should have continued in their Uprightness and Integrity, and been as so many golden Trumpets to sound forth the Glory and Praises of their great Creator. What are we then that God should set his Heart upon us, that he should seek our Good as He hath done, and still goeth on to do. What are we, that when we were lost and ruin'd, he should find a Ransom for us, and purchase us at so great a Rate as the precious Blood of his own and only Son; and that He should design for us so great a Portion as himself, such an Happiness as the Glory and Joys of Heaven.

Secondly, *Let us consider Man as He is a Sinner.* A lapsed fallen Creature, fallen from a great height of Honour and Bliss, to a deep abyss of Wo and Misery; and through his own Fault and Folly, it was an Act of Choice. So God saith, *Perditia tua exte, thy Destruction is of thy Self.* The Devil indeed tempted him, but he could not force him; He willingly complied with his Enemy, took in the bait, and yielded to the Temptation. Though He had a Power not to Sin, yet He did not make use of that Power, and this Consideration will bring down the Price of Man a great deal lower than what it was, being consider'd only as a Creature. He was at first but a lump of Clay, an earthen Vessel,

fel, but now he is a Potsherd, so called, *Isa. 45. 9. Let the Potsherd strive with the Potsherds of the Earth.* He is now a broken Potsherd, and what is that fit for, but to be thrown out of Doors and cast upon a Dunghil. He was Dust at first, but now he is rebellious Dust; which hath flown in the Face of its Creator. Now he is a Vessel in which there is no Pleasure, a tainted Vessel, a filthy, Musty, and stinking Vessel; before he was *mean* Man, but now He is *vile* Man: So humbled Job upon his Eyes being opened, so as to see God, acknowledged himself to be, *Job 40. 4. Behold, I am vile*; and that not because He at that Time was *poor* Job, but specially because he was *sinful* Job.

At first there was an Infinite Distance between God and Man upon the Account of Being, for God is the bottomless, boundless Ocean of Being, whereas Man is but a drop; but now there is in Man an utter Contrariety unto God. He is a degenerate Creature, become an utter Enemy to God, and a Rebel up in Arms against him. He hates him for his Holiness which is his Glory, and for his Justice, which highly becomes him, and is necessary for him as he is Rector of the World. He will not submit to his Government, nor approve of his Law, nor delight in his Ways. Now when they do seriously reflect upon themselves, and consider their own sinfulness and great unworthiness; as all regenerate and Heaven-born Souls are by the blessed Spirit of God made to see and consider it, and to lay it to their Hearts; and, I say, when they do so, when they do consider that Infinite Distance, which is between God and them as they are his Creatures, the Work of his Hands; and likewise that

that great vileness that is in them, as they are apostate, degenerate, and fallen Creatures, overrun with a cursed Plague of Leprosie, having no sound nor clean Part in them, but from the Crown of their Head to the Sole of their Foot, full of Botches and Biles and putrifying Sores; they cannot but cry out with Holy *David*, in *Psalm* 8. 4. *What is Man that thou art mindful of him?* And in the Text, *How precious are thy Thoughts unto me, O God!* Specially, when they add one Consideration more, which will greatly contribute to their Value, and that is this.

Thirdly, *The great and admirable Advantages which do accrue unto the Saints, by those gracious Thoughts which God had from Everlasting concerning them and still hath.* For none of them are vain and idle, but all at Work and that for good to them. Whatsoever there is of good in the Promises of the Gospel, or in the Works of Providence; it was first in the Thoughts and Purposes of God: All their present Comfort, all their Future and Eternal Happiness was first contriv'd and form'd in the fertile, and never miscarrying Womb of Gods Decrees, as I shall plainly shew you in these Three Things.

First, *All their present Comforts and good Things are the Products and Effects of the gracious Thoughts of God.* There is no good which God hath wrought in them, no good which he hath done for them; but it is all according to the Plot He had laid in his own Bosom, all in Pursuance of his Decrees. For the making of this out, observe what the Apostle *Paul* saith, in *Eph.* 1. 3, 4. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places or Things in Christ Jesus, according as*
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He hath chosen us in him before the Foundation of the World. God hath been Rich in Mercy to his People, He hath abounded in his kindness to them; He hath blest them not only with Temporal Blessings, but likewise with Spiritual which are inconceivably better; and those too in the Heavenlies, which are the best of all. But now, if the Question be asked, From whence do all these Blessings come? All those Spiritual Blessings which we have now in Hand, and are already put into the actual Possession of; and that Right and Title which we have to all the rest, those great Blessings of the other and better World: The Apostle tells us, they all proceed from, and are the result and issue of these Divine Thoughts, the Everlasting Love and Purpose of God. It is all according as He hath chosen us in him. It was there, that he did with a wise and gracious Hand, lay the Foundation of his Peoples Happiness, and all that He hath ever since, that done for them and in them is the Superstructure, what he hath built upon that Foundation.

In the fulness of Time, God sent his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law, to bear our Iniquities; to lay down his Life for us, to be made Sin and a Curse for us, that we might be redeemed from the Curse of the Law, and made the Righteousness of God in him, but this was according to the Purpose of God long before. And therefore in *Rev. 13. 8.* *Christ* is said to be the *Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World.* How was that? Not actually, for it was not done till some Thousands of Years after, but in the Purpose and Decree of God.

You were by Nature, Principle and Practice Children of Disobedience and of Wrath; but ye
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are made the Children of God by Adoption and Regeneration, but unto this you were predestinated; *Eph. 1. 5. Having predestinated us unto the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good Pleasure of his Will.*

You are born again from above and of the Spirit, being made Partakers of a Divine Nature and of Gods Holiness, and so are Heirs Apparent of God, and Joint-heirs of Jesus Christ; but how comes this about? *It is according as He hath chosen you in him, i. e. in Christ, before the Foundation of the World, that ye should be holy, and without blame before him in Love, Eph. 1. 4.*

You are brought in some Measure into a Conformity to Christ, and as you do bear the Image of the Earthly, so you do the Image of the Heavenly; and shall by the Spirit of the Lord be changed into the same more and more from Glory to Glory, till you come to be satisfied with it; this still is done in pursuance of Gods Eternal Thoughts and Purposes, *Rom. 8. 29. Whom He did fore-know, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the Image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many Brethren.*

You have been called by the Gospel when others have been past by; yea, and that Call hath been Effectual upon you; your Ears have been opened, so that you have not been rebellious, but heard, and complied, and come in to Christ, and by him to God. And this is the Effect of Gods Eternal Purpose. As you may see, in *2 Tim. 1. 9. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began.*

In short, you have an Inheritance, a rich and glorious Inheritance, such as is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; this is in part bestow'd upon you here, but the greater Part, the full Enjoyment is reserved in Heaven: But how come ye to obtain it? The Apostle tells you, it is in and by Christ, and through Gods Eternal Purpose, *Eph. 1. 11. God will gather together into one, all things in Christ, in whom also we have obtained an Inheritance, being predestinated according to the Purpose of him, who worketh all things according to the Counsel of his Will.* So that you plainly see, all hath been and is the Product of God's Eternal Thoughts.

Secondly, *All those Future good Things and Advantages, which you shall have while you continue in this World, and are travelling through your Enemies Countrey to your Fathers House, are likewise the comfortable and pleasant Fruits of these Eternal Thoughts of God.* David admired God and said, *What am I, O Lord God, and what is my Father House that thou hast brought me hitherto?* And then he added, *2 Sam. 7. 19. This was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, but thou hast spoken also of thy Servants House for a great while to come.* And we may very well say of all those that were given unto Christ, God hath Thought of them, and of their Concernments for a great while to come; for as long as you Live, as your Pilgrimage shall last. For *Eph. 1. 11. He worketh all Things after the Counsel of his Will.* Namely, the Eternal Counsel of his Will, all Things that he works He doth so work, and all things that come to pass in which you are concerned, all things which are past were so wrought, and all Things that are yet to come shall be so wrought.

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And here it is worth our while to consider that which *Aquinas* hath observed. Some things that God doth, are only the Products of his Will; as He instanceth in the great work of Creation. Take the *Chaos*, that rude and undigested heap, out of which God formed all Things; that *Fire* should be made out of this Part, and *Air* out of that, and *Earth* out of another: That one piece should make *Wood*, another *Stone*, one should make *Beasts*, and another *Fishes*, that *Adam* should be made of this Dust, and not of the other, this was merely the Will of God; and so it is in other Cases of higher Importance, that God should choose some Persons, and pass by others: That He should set some a-part to obtain Salvation, and suffer others to Live and Die in their Sins. That he should work justifying, saving Faith in the Hearts of some, and give others up to the Power of their Unbelief; there is no Reason to be given of this by us, or any Person in the World. It is a vain thing, a piece of idle Curiosity for any to enquire and seek out a Reason; this must be resolved wholly and solely into the Divine Will, herein God acts purely out of Sovereignty. Why God should choose some, and not others? Why He should set his Heart upon some, and not others? Why He should give Grace to thee, and not to thy Neighbour that Lives at the next Door, to thee, and not to one that sits in the same Pew with thee, or lies in the same Bed? There is no Reason to be given of this, but the Will of God. Here his Will takes Place. Here that Orders and Rules, and shall He not do with his own as He pleaseth: Hear what our Saviour saith, *Mat. 11. 25, 26. I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid*

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these Things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes ; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

But then, there are other things in which there is not only the Will of God, but likewise the Council of his Will. As when God hath once according to the good Pleasure of his Will pitched upon Persons, and made choice of them as those who shall be the Objects of his special distinguishing Love ; and those whom he will make everlastingly Happy with, and in himself: Then the Counsel of his Will steps forth, takes Place, and Acts its part. And it contrives the Method that it will take, and the means which it will use for the bringing about his great, gracious, and glorious Ends. That is it which Orders and Points out the way in which He will manifest his Love unto them, and bring them safely and seasonably to Happiness and Glory. I will take Care of them in their Infancy and Childhood, and teach them to go. I will cast their Lines for them in such a Place, and in such a Family where they shall have good Education, wholesome Instruction and Pious Examples. I will plant them under such an awakening and warming and heart-affecting Ministry, such a Sermon shall be Preached to them at such a Time, to convince them of the sinfulness of Sin, and drive them out of themselves ; and such a Sermon shall be Preached at such a Time to acquaint them with the Excellency and Alisufficiency of Christ, together with the absolute need they have of him, so that they shall accept and embrace him, believe in him and submit to him.

I will let loose Satan upon them, and He shall let flie such a fiery Dart at them, and furiously

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Assault them with such a Temptation ; that they may know what is in their Hearts, and learn not to trust in themselves, nor at any Time go out to this Work, or to that Conflict in their own Strength.

I will with-draw my Assistance and Influence from them at such a Time so far, and to such a Degree, that they shall become an easie Prey to their Enemy, and fall into such a Sin, that may promote their future Care and Watchfulness ; shew them the constant need they have of Support and Help from Heaven, and make them walk more humbly with their God.

I will exercise them with such an Affliction ; yea, with such a Variety and Succession of Afflictions, as they shall see this Place is not their Rest, nor their Portion here ; these shall be as Wormwood upon the Breast for the weaning of Children from Things here below ; but I will bear them up under them all, and carry them through them : And make known to them my Power in their weakness, and shew unto them the dearneſs of my Love, the constancy of my Care, and the Riches of my Grace ; I will do them good and make them better, perform all Things for them, perfect what Concerns them, and bring them to Heaven at the last. Thus, all Things concerning you in the whole Course of your Lives are order'd by, and in the Eternal Thoughts of God ; all that you meet with here, is the Issue and Result of his Divine Counsel.

Thirdly, *All that Happiness and Glory, which is provided and laid up for you in the other World, is likewise the Fruit and Product of these Eternal Thoughts of God.* That is, the *Terminus Electionis*, the Term of Election, that which God did

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graciously Elect his People to ; that was the ultimate End He aimed at next to his own Glory, in that he takes singular Delight, in that they shall have fulness of Satisfaction. When once they come to Heaven, they shall have a large Prospect and compleat View of all that which was in the Heart and Purpose of God from all Everlasting upon their Account ; indeed the whole Plot of Love and Grace from first to last was laid in these Thoughts of God. I will give you but one Scripture for the Proof of this, which you have in 2 Thes. 2. 13. *We are bound to give Thanks always unto God for you Brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you, through Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth :* where you have these Things making to our present Purpose worthy of your Observation.

First, You have there the gracious Act which God was pleased to put forth ; namely, an Act of Election, *God hath chosen you :* This was an Act of pure Grace, not for any worthiness in Man, neither Faith foreseen, nor Works foreseen, but merely for his own good Pleasure ; and this Act of God is to Purpose, and shall not be in vain, for the Election hath obtained, and shall go on to do so.

Secondly, You have there the *Time*, if I may so speak, when this gracious Act was exerted by God ; it was *from the beginning*, by which we are not to understand *the Time of their being called*, as some would have it ; for though in order to our searching after, and making sure of our Election, we must begin with our Calling, yet Election it self was long before our Calling, nor are we to understand *the Beginning of the World*, when

our first Parents fell by their eating the forbidden Fruit, from that State of Happiness in which they were Created, and we fell in them being in *Adams Loins*, as others would have it, but from all Everlasting; as in *John 1. 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Jesus Christ, as to his Divine Nature was in the beginning, *i. e.* from all Eternity.

Thirdly, *You have here the Persons who are the Objects of this gracious Election.* You, you *Thessalonians*, you that are called to be Saints, and unto whom the Word Preached by us came, not only in Word, but also in Power; so that ye became Followers of us, and of the Lord.

Fourthly, *You have here the End, unto which they were and are chosen; that is, something in Time, and something in Eternity.* Something in Time; namely, Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth, and something in Eternity, that is Salvation; which carrieth in it not only a Deliverance and Freedom from all Evil, but likewise the Possession and Fruition of all good: God hath chosen you to Salvation as the end, thorough Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth as the Means. Thus you see what an huge Compass the Thoughts of God do fetch, of what a vast Extent they are; how much they take in and graspe! He hath looked to all Things that concern you, and provided for you for ever. And therefore upon all these Accounts, *David* might well say, *how precious are thy Thoughts unto me, O God!* So much may suffice to be spoken to the Doctrinal Part; and now I shall proceed to the Improvement of the Point in a way of Use and Application. And that shall be but Twofold.

I. Of Information.

II Of Exhortation.

Use. I begin with the Use of Information, which shall be divided into Four Branches.

First, *We may from hence Learn the Infinite Goodness of God*: That he should please to entertain, and keep up such Thoughts as these concerning any of the Children of Men; and I do advise you to bring this Consideration home and nearer to your selves. Seriously think with your selves, how exceeding gracious the Lord is, that he should have such Thoughts and Purposes concerning you: For this will be an excellent way to put a much greater sweetness into the Meditation, and to render its Influence more 'powerful upon you, more obliging, more endearing; drawing out your Affections, and raising your Admirations, as it did here in the Royal Prophet. *How precious are thy Thoughts unto me, O God!* The Angels were at the first most excellent and noble Beings, much above us the Top of the Creation; indeed they without a Tempter fell from their first Estate and left their own Habitation, and made themselves vile and miserable: Now if God would have pitied them in that their lapsed and lost Estate, if he would have recover'd and raised them up again after their fall; in a Word, if after they had ruin'd themselves he would have shewn them his Salvation, they might have made to his glorious Majesty far better returns than we are capable of making, and would as so many golden Trumpets have sounded forth the Praises of their gracious Redeemer. But God had no Yearning, nor sounding of Bowels over them, no Thoughts of Pity and Love for them: No, no, they being fallen, He was resolved to

let them lie, and since they would not do their Duty, he was resolved against shewing them any Mercy; having thrown themselves out of Heaven, He in his just Indignation tumbled them down to Hell. This might have been our Case as well as theirs, it is nothing but Grace, yea, Free-grace that hath made a Difference, and therefore it may very well be marvellous in our Eyes: And so it will be for ever to the redeemed of the Lamb.

There are indeed those that pretend to give some Reasons of Gods, shewing Mercy to fallen Man, when He shew'd none to fallen Angels; of which these are Two.

First, Man was tempted to Sin, whereas the Angels were not; but what of that, a Temptation to Sin did not infer, and carry a long with it a Necessity of sinning. Satan in the Serpent did tempt *Eve*; and She *Adam* to eat the forbidden Fruit, but they could not force nor compel them to do it. They had Power sufficient given them to resist the Temptation, and to keep their standing; it was the Devils Sin to tempt them, but it was their Fault to comply with the Temptation, and yield to it. Their Commission of Sin was an Act of Choice. Again,

Secondly, They say, though some of the Angels fell, and were Eternally lost; yet many of them stood, yea many thousands, and ten thousands, an innumerable Company of them, and so the whole was not lost; but if God had not shewn Mercy to Man, the whole Species of Humane Nature had been ruin'd. And what tho' it had, would the ever-blessed God have been a loser by that? Surely no, He could with ease have peopled the World again with others, and better

better than they; *Mat. 3. 9. He is able of Stones to raise up Children to Abraham.* These are not Cogent Arguments with God, notwithstanding these Things, and all else that could be said; it was meerly the goodness of God that formed and entertained these Thoughts: We must ascribe them to his *voluntas*, the good Pleasure of his Will; had it not been for that, his Thoughts concerning Man might have been no other than Thoughts of Displeasure, and Thoughts of Revenge.

First, *Gods Thoughts of us might have been Thoughts of Displeasure.* Yea of hottest Displeasure, the Prophet tells us, *Psalms 7. That God is angry with the Wicked every Day.* And if he be so every Day, we may rationally conclude his being so all the Day; and he might justly have been so with our first Parents, and with all their Posterity. He could not choose but be highly offended, to see his own most curious Work-manship so suddenly and miserably spoiled, and to see his own lovely and beautiful Image, which he had drawn upon Man so shamefully defac'd; to see him degenerate and prove very bad, whom but a little before he had made and pronounced very Good. It could not but provoke him, and go to his very Heart to see himself so greatly affronted by his own Creature, whom He had given Being to, and laid so many, and great Obligations upon. To see Credit given to a Serpent and a Devil in it, rather than to himself, who is the God of Truth, and Love; in a Word, to see Man rebel against his sovereign Lord, cast off the Yoke of Obedience, and violate and transgress the Law of his Creation for such a Trifle as the Fruit of a Tree.

And this Divine Displeasure might justly have been an abiding Displeasure, this Fire being once kindled in the Breast of God might have burnt down to the lowest Hell, and all Mankind made its fewel; it might have been Displeasure blown and boiled up to an utter Indignation, that would admit of no Parley, no Truce, no Reconciliation: And what God once said in his Wrath, as to the utter Rejection of the *Jews*, Jer. 15. 1. *Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my Mind could not be toward this People, cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.* He might have said to us, they have abused so much goodness that they are altogether unworthy of any. Away with them, cast them out, out of my Sight, out of my Favour, out of my Presence; not only out of *Paradise*, but into Hell; where they shall be to Eternity made as miserable, as they have made themselves Vile; do but make it your own Case, would not you your selves be displeased to see nothing but Tares and stinking Weeds springing up in that Field, where you had sown nothing but the choicest of the Wheat; or to see some curious Master-piece of your own drawing, upon which you had bestowed your best Art, and in it took great Delight, spoiled and defac'd. Things being thus, and made by our selves; God might never have Thought of us, without loathing and abhorrency, and then which follows hereupon.

Secondly, *Gods Thoughts concerning us might have been none other than Thoughts of revenge.* He might have unalterably fixed his Resolve of prosecuting these Rebels to the utmost Extremity; and since they did not like to submit to his milde and most gracious Government, and comply with him up-
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on Terms so easie and highly advantageously to themselves, He would make them to their cost and smart feel the Severity and Rigour of his violated Law and incensed Justice; and since they would not exert and put forth that sufficient Power, with which He had furnished them in a way of ready and chearful Obedience, He would put forth, and they should feel the Power of his Anger in a way of Righteous, because deserved Punishment. *Adam* doubtless did expect no other, and therefore being a Transgressor, upon the hearing of Gods Voice, he was fill'd with direful Apprehensions, and did what He could to hide himself.

And this God hath done, daily doth, and will go on to do upon many Thousands and Millions of lost and miserable Creatures, who persist in their Rebellion; and after their hardness and impenitent Heart, Treasure up unto themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God: *For whom there is nothing left, but a fearful Expectation of fiery Indignation that shall devour them,* Heb. 10. 27.

And this might have been our Case as well as theirs; yea, and the Case of all Mankind without Exception; for there was nothing in us to make a Difference, we were as much defiled as any, as much depraved as any, as much Enemies to God in our Minds, averse from all that is spiritually Good, and prone to all Evil. Original Sin is not in one Man more than in another, but in all alike; *Psalms 14. They are corrupt, they have done abominable Works, there is none that doth good; the Lord looked down from Heaven upon the Children of Men, to see if there were any that did understand*

derstand and seek God. And when he look'd and sought, what did he find, what Condition was the World in? He gives a true and sad Account in the next Verse, an universal Pollution, and therefore all liable to the same Condemnation. *They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doth good, no, not one.* And therefore there might have been the same ruine determin'd upon you, and the same Place of Torment, the same State and Degree of Misery assigned unto you; from hence it necessarily follows, that for God to think Thoughts of Mercy to you, and to have Purposes of Grace and Peace concerning you; for God to throw out *Ta-bulum post naufragium*, a Plank after Ship-wrack that you may not be drowned in the Sea of Perdition, but get safe to the heavenly Shoar. Oh what infinite and marvellous Grace was it in him, after you had destroy'd your selves, to resolve and say, *yet in me shall be your help!* Tho' you have been mine Enemies and your own too, yet I will be your Friend; though you have been your own Ruine, yet my own and only Son shall be your Saviour. This you must of Necessity Attribute to the goodness of God, and if you be the happy Objects of that Salvation which hath been wrought by him, this goodness deserves to be, and therefore it ought to be, and accordingly it will be the Matter of your Present and Eternal Admirings: So much may suffice to be spoken to the First-branch of this Use of Information, come we to the next.

Secondly, *From hence we may likewise learn, How greatly we are obliged and beholden to our Lord Jesus Christ!* If ever any may lay claim to a right to our dearest Love and highest Praises, then for cer-

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certain He may. Hither many of you, my dear Friends, are this Day come to celebrate the Lords Supper, and that you are commanded to do in remembrance of the Lord himself; in remembrance of his Person, than whom there is not a better; and of his Love, than which there is not a greater; in remembrance of his dying and offering up himself a Sacrifice for us, that he might be a Saviour to us: And indeed this, all this is worthy to be remembred by us. It highly deserves to be in our Thoughts, and upon our Hearts, not only at a Sacrament, but every Day in the Week; the more frequently, and the more seriously and thankfully you entertain yourselves with the Thoughts thereof, the better you are, and better and better still you are like to be. It was the Fruit and Product of the dearest Love, and an Act of the lowest Condescension for Christ, so great and glorious a Person, to take upon him our Nature together with its Infirmities, and not only so, but likewise to have the Iniquities of us all laid upon him, and to bear our Sins in his own Body; and to endure the Wrath that we might have the Love, to be made a Curse that we might receive the Blessing, and to die that we might Live. Let us Study and Meditate upon this Love of Christ which passeth Knowledge.

But our Obligation to Christ did commence and take Place long before his dying for us; yea, and before his Incarnation. He was our Friend, he was our Brother; He took us into his Heart and Care, before he took our Nature, and was made Flesh. He was on our side from all Eternity, before we our selves were called out of nothing into Being. Upon the foresight of our Fall and Ruine, and that miserable Condition into
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which our first Parents by their Transgression of the Law of the Creation would certainly bring themselves and all their Posterity, he was graciously pleased to undertake our Cause; and knowing there would be no other Intercessor, he engaged his Heart to approach unto God and appear on our behalf; that is a most sweet and excellent Scripture to this Purpose, which we have in *Zech. 6. 13.* *Even He shall build the Temple of the Lord, and He shall bear the Glory, and shall sit and rule upon his Throne, and he shall be a Priest upon his Throne, and the Counsel of Peace shall be between them both;* i. e. say some, between the two Offices of Christ, viz. his Priestly, and his Kingly Office; both which will be imploied for, and contribute to the Welfare, Salvation, and Happiness of his People. Though, as one saith, these two are very different, the one being for the Execution of Justice, the other for the obtaining of Mercy and Pardon; yet they shall in this most sweetly Unite and Concur, the Priestly Office tending to the purchase of Good, and the Kingly Office to the conferring and giving out of the Good purchased, and for the maintaining and continuing them in the Possession of it. Others say, by *Both* in that Place we are to understand, *Jehovah, and the Branch*, the Father and the Son, yet not excluding the Holy Ghost, who is the Third ever glorious Person in the God-head. There was a Council of Peace held in Heaven, and Designs of Peace laid from Everlasting; which Christ the Son of God had a special Hand in, as he was from Everlasting with the Father, so he was from Everlasting in the Account of the Father, and by his own Consent and Act a *common Person* representing his People,

Prov.

Prov. 8. 23. *I was set up from Everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the Earth was.* How set up? *Corona'ta fui*, so some render it, was Crowned, *inuncta fui*, so others, I was anointed, as the Head of the Church, which is my Mystical Body, anointed to be King, Prophet, and Priest thereunto. In the Last Times he was *set forth* to be Propitiation through Faith in his Blood; but it was from Everlasting that he was *set up* to be a Mediator and Advocate for us. It was in the fulness of Time that he offered himself a Sacrifice for us, but it was from beginning that he was anointed to be a Priest unto us. It was here upon the Earth that his gracious Lips taught his People, but it was before the Earth was, that he was ordained to be Prophet to them; and from hence it is, that in *1 ph. 1. 4.* *Believers are said to be chosen in him before the Foundation of the World.* It is not said, they were chosen *for Christ*, for Christ was not the Reason or moving Cause of Election; that was done *according to Gods own good Pleasure, which He had purposed in himself*; as we read in *Eph. 1. 9.* But God did elect them in Christ as a common Person, Christ and his People, as to Time, were chosen together, they were chosen with Christ; and that is not all, for they are likewise chosen in him. He as the Head, and they as his Members. Oh therefore, see that you love this Jesus, and that entirely, Love him more and more, whom you cannot possibly Love too much: When you come to Heaven you will be *all Love*, yet that will not be equal to his Merits nor to your Obligations, for in him you were chosen from all Eternity; and in him too, you are blessed with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Things and Places. All Promises,

mises, and all Grace, and all Glory too have been given to Christ; and that as your Head, and so given to him for you, and by Consequence given to you in him.

Thirdly, *Let us again here Learn to take special Notice of, and be very thankful for the great Mercy and Kindness, which God hath expressed to the Children of Men in opening his Heart, and revealing these his Thoughts to them.* For though as He tells us, he himself doth know the Thoughts which he thinks concerning them, yet he did not need to have acquainted them with them; if he had so pleas'd, He might still have kept them Secret, and lockt them up in his own Bosom among his Treasures: Even the Children of Light might have been left to walk in gross Darknes, and as they cannot tell what is in the Womb of Providence, and what may be the Product of a Day; so they might have been as Ignorant of those Things which are in the Eternal Counsels of God. It would have been infinite goodness in God to have let us at the Last gather the Fruit, and reap the Benefit and Advantage of them in the World to come, and to all Eternity, though he had not signified to us before-hand, nor afforded us any Comfort of it, as a Cordial for our present Support, and the rendering more easie our Passage through our Enemies Countrey.

God might have kept us all our Days in a pan-nick Fear, and so in Bondage. We might have had no other sound in our Ears, but the Thunders of Mount *Sinai*, the dreadful Threatnings and Curses of a violated Law: We might have seen nothing but the angry Frowns of a provoked and revenging God, we might have felt nothing but the painful Sting of an exasperated

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Thoughts concerning his People. **III**

Conscience, and the smarting Blows of Providence piercing even to the very Soul. In a Word, we might have been made a Terrour to our selves, and an Astonishment to all about us, being always kept in a fearful Expectation of fiery Indignation, and being made Fews for the Wrath of God Eternally to feed upon. And if we had lived and died in this Condition, not only under a Cloud of Darknes, but in a violent Storm; the great and holy God would have been unreproachably Righteous, for as sad and dismal a Case as it is, it is no worse than our Iniquities have deserved. And if at last, upon the Souls getting out of the Body, God shall vouchsafe to give it a Smile, and deliver it from those infernal Spirits, who waited for it as their long'd for Prey; and shall commit it to the Care and Guard of the Holy Angels, who shall safely Conduct it to the Glory above, the Celestial, Pleasant, and Delightful Mansions, the Region of Light, and Life, and Love, that our Lord and Saviour had purchased with his most precious Blood, and is gone before to prepare, and as a fore-runner to take Possession of, not only in his own Name but in theirs also, it would have been just Matter and ground of Eternal Admirings. How much more must it be thankfully owned to be free, and rich Grace in God to make a Revelation of this to us while we are here in the House of our Pilgrimage, that so we may with a due greatness of Spirit encounter the Difficulties of the Way, and girding up the Loins of our Minds make more haste to the Joy which is set before us. Grace, rich Grace was the golden Key that opened the Door, and let us into the Knowledge hereof. And there are several Things that do Accent this
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Mercy, and may most deservedly inhanche the Price and Value of it, as to Instance.

First, *The earliness of the Discovery.* God did not delay, but came in quickly with the glad-tidings for the Relief of the affrighted Transgressor. Many Divines conceive, that our first Parents fell the very same Day in which they were Created, and God was pleased to come into them with this blessed Revelation the very same Day upon which they fell. God had from all Eternity foreseen what a fatal Wound they would at once give both themselves and their Posterity; and thereupon he did long before provide a Remedy, and had it in a readiness; and so together with the Temptation there was a Way opened for an escape: And accordingly, as soon as the Temptation did take, and the Wound was given; God gave Intimation of the Remedy, that so though they had fallen into Sin, and thereby into Misery, yet they might not sink into despair: Thus in that Valley of *Achar*, there was opened to them a Door of Hope. Here, I again say, there was rich Grace: For since *Adam* had rebell'd against God, God might for ever have rejected him; since *Adam* did foolishly Attempt the hiding of himself from God, God might have hid himself from him: And since *Adam* had wilfully sinn'd, God might well be angry, and have resolved upon retaining his Anger for ever; and as *Adam* did fill with fear, so might God have fill'd with Fury, and have caused his Fury to rest upon him. The guilty Malefactor might have heard nothing but Thunder-claps, and seen nothing but devouring Flames about his Ears. But behold, God came to him in the cool of the Day, and with a soft still Voice. There indeed

was

was a Threatning denounced against the Woman, that in Sorrow she should bring forth Children; and another against the Man, that in the Sweat of his Face He should eat his Bread: But still here was Mercy in the very Threatning, though the Woman had sorrowful Travail, yet a comfortable bringing forth, and that not of Monsters, but of Children; and though He had hard labour, yet he should have Bread to eat: And together with this, there was a most sweet and precious Promise, which look'd like Light breaking forth out of Obscurity, like the dawning of a fair and beautiful Morning, after thick and gross Darkness, *Gen. 3. 15. The Seed of the Woman shall break the Serpents Head*, i. e. Satans Design shall be baffled, his Power shall be broken, He shall in great Measure fail of his End; and besides all this, as a plain Evidence of that Kindness, which notwithstanding their miscarriage God still had for them. He made Provision for the covering of their Nakedness, and so made it to appear; that though they had wickedly cast off their Fear of him, yet He had not cast off all his Care of them. Therefore *Gen. 3. 21. Unto Adam and his Wife did the Lord God make Coat of Skins, and clothed them.* Thus did Grace come in betimes to the undone, ruin'd Sinners Support and Comfort.

Secondly, *This Discovery hath been frequently repeated.* God hath insisted upon it again and again, and in sundry Ways, and divers Manners made his gracious Thoughts and Purposes known to his People. This He hath done both by his Word, and by Types and Figures. Of which I will give you some few Instances, beginning with the Types.

As that of the *Ark* in the Time of the Deluge in which *Noah* and his Family were saved from those mighty Waters that cover'd the Face of the whole Earth, and drown'd the World, and swept off at once all the Inhabitants of it, whose wickedness had been great. This *Ark* did prefigure the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all true Believers do by Faith *Ark* and hide themselves and find Safety; and shall at the last be brought to rest upon the Mountains of Myrrhe, and in the Beds of Spices, as *Noah* was in and by the other upon the Mountains of *Ararat*.

So the Cities of refuge among the *Jews* set out by Divine Appointment for the Relief of the Manslayer, that he might flee thither, and there be out of Danger, though eagerly pursued by the Avenger of Blood; and this also did signify the same Blessed *Jesus*, who is the Hope set before us, unto whom it is our Interest to flee for Refuge, and in, and through him may have Everlasting Security, and strong Consolation.

Once more, all the Sacrifices under the Law by which Atonement was made, they did all, as by the Hand lead them to Christ, all expressed and held out to them the same *Jesus*, who was the Antitype; and who did offer up himself unto God a Sacrifice for Sinners, that so he might become a Saviour to them.

And as God hath been pleased to reveal this by various Types and Figures, so he hath done it often by his Word, in a way of Prophecy and Promise, which stand upon Record in the most Holy Scriptures, of which I shall only Instance in a few. *First*, In that to *Abraham*, Gen. 22. 18. *In thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be Blessed*; i. e. in Christ who was the Son of *David*,

David, and so of Abraham according to the Flesh, who was made a Curse for us in order to the redeeming us from the Curse of the Law, and came to bless his People by turning them from their Iniquities. So that in *Isa. 9. 6.* *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the Government shall be upon his Shoulder, and his Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.* And again, *Zech. 9. 9.* *Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion, shout, O Daughter of Jerusalem, behold, thy King cometh unto thee, He is Just, and having Salvation, lowly, riding upon an Ass, and upon a Colt, the Foal of an Ass.* And that I might Name no more, take that in *Mat. 1. 21,* and *23.* *She shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his Name Jesus, for he shall save his People from their Sins.* And, *Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his Name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.* God in our Nature, God on our side. Many Scriptures of the like Import might be mention'd, all which do manifestly shew, how much the Good, Salvation and Happiness of Man by Jesus Christ was upon the Heart of God; and how fixed and immoveable his gracious Thoughts to such a Purpose have been, He is so in one Mind that none can turn him. What He hath purposed for them, He will surely bring to pass.

Thirdly, *These sweet and most blessed Revelations of the Divine Thoughts have been still made and given out with a greater and greater Light, and Clearness.* That Light by which we may look into them hath been like that of the Morning, which shines more and more to the perfect Day. As now in that great, main, and principal Pro-

mise of the *Messiah*, in which all the Saints Hope, Salvation, and Comfort was laid up; God was pleased not to give it out at once, but to proceed gradually, and step by step. First, That Mans Deliverance should be effected, and the Serpents Head should be bruised *by the Seed of the Woman*. Then that it should be *by the Seed of Abraham*, Gen. 22. 18. *In thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be Blessed*. Then that he should come of the Tribe of Judah. And when, Gen. 49. 10. *The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the People be: Both Jews and Gentiles shall be brought into him, and do him Homage, and be a willing People in the Day of his Power; then it was revealed, that He should be of the House of David*, Jer. 23. 5, 6. *The Days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall Reign and Prosper, and shall execute Judgment and Justice in the Earth: In his Days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safe'y; and this is the Name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness*. And that he should be born of a Virgin, Isa. 7. 14. *The Lord himself shall give you a sign, behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel*. And also that he should be born in such a certain Place, Mic. 5. 2. *Thou Bethlehem, Ephratah, though thou be little among the Thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from Everlasting*. And likewise, that he should have the Iniquities of all his People laid upon him, and be wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised, and bear the Chastisement of our Peace, Isa. 53. 5. And

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that he should finish the Transgression, and make an end of Sins, and make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and bring in Everlasting Righteousness, Dan. 9. 24. And in this Manner, the infinitely wise God did choose to proceed, that so his People might grow in Knowledge, and arrive at a full Understanding of the Thing, and be more satisfied about the Person promised, and so more ready to receive him at his coming; and have in themselves a larger Measure of Consolation. And we have Reason with all thankfulness to reflect upon it, as the singular goodness of God to us, upon whom the ends of the World are come; that an Affair of so vast a Concernment hath been so cleared up before. That though we are fallen into the very Dregs of Time, in which the World is so generally and desperately corrupted; and wickedness is grown up to so great an height, and walks up and down at Noon-day without a Blush; yet we Live in such Times, in which there is the greatest Light, as to the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith. Not under the gross Darkness of *Paganism*, which did in former Ages overspread our Land; nor under that of *Popery* which unhappily succeeded it, but under the bright and glorious Sun-shine of the Gospel; and surely it becomes, and highly concerns us all to press after a proportionable Degree of Knowledge; and see to it, that we our selves be made Light in the Lord, and that we walk in the World as Children of the Light, and of the Day.

Fourthly, *Many of these Thoughts have been already brought into Act.* As from Eternity he purposed to do, so He hath done; and this may be to us a ground of Confidence and full Assurance,

and by Consequence Matter of strong Consolation ; that those Thoughts of God shall not prove abortive, which do yet remain to be performed. Those things which God hath done for his Church and People in former Ages, are to us a Pledge of that which He hath further to do : For there are a great many Things, which God hath still to do in the World, many Things contained in the Word, in the Prophecies and Promises of it, and all shall be made good. Heaven and Earth shall pass away ; but of all that which God hath spoken not one Jot or Tittle shall pass away, but shall be fulfilled ; there are many things yet to be done about *his Sons Enemies* : Namely, the making of them all his Foot-stool, the Destruction of *Babylon*, and the coming of her Plagues in one Day. And many Things concerning *his Church*, as the breaking from off her Neck the Yoke of Oppressors, giving of her Rest, making her a quiet Habitation, glorious, and the Praise of the whole Earth : Together with the Calling of the *Jews*, which will be as Life from the Dead, and bringing in the fulness of the *Gentiles* ; and so the giving unto Christ the *Heathen* for his Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for his Possession. And many Things concerning *particular Saints*, as the Calling of all those whom he hath chosen, and the perfecting of those who are already called. The bringing into Christ those whom He gave him, and the building up in Christ those that are brought in. The fitting of them for Glory, and making them meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, and then the giving to them the Actual and full Possession of it. Now all this shall be done, every Part and Branch of it in its Season, and that

which

which is done is a Pledge or Earnest put into our Hands, and so an Assurance given us that we shall not fail of the rest; for *Moses* tells us, *Deut. 32. 4. He is the Rock, and his Work is perfect: It shall be so, it must be so.* For if God did not perfect his Work, he would not perfect his own Glory; nor could his People perfect his Praise. Besides, for a Person not to go thorough, and finish that which he hath begun would be greatly to his Disparagement, as speaking Folly in him, or Weakness, or Change; none of which is to be found in that infinitely perfect and glorious Being. Again, if God should not accomplish any of his Eternal Purposes, nor do that which he hath in his Word told us shall be done; it would follow, that some of his Thoughts are vain, but that is a thing impossible, though the Thoughts of Men are vain, yet not so the Thoughts of God, whose Understanding is Infinite. *His Counsel shall stand, and the Thoughts of his Heart to all Generations.* They shall so stand as that all which doth oppose shall fall before them, though there may be many *Lets of Opposition*, yet there shall not be *one Let of Impediment*; for this he hath declared to be his fixed Resolution. *Isa. 46. 10. I will do all my Purpose.* Mark that Word, *All*, which, though it be short, yet, is very comprehensive, and takes in whatsoever Holy Souls can desire.

Let me more particularly speak of it with Reference to the Salvation of Gods Elect. I know that many of you are solicitous about your own Eternal Welfare, and are apt to fill with Fears, upon the Account of those Difficulties which are in your Way; and the many subtle, vigilant, and powerful Enemies, that seek and will do all

they can to effect your Ruine; and you likewise are greatly desirous of, and no less thoughtful about your near Relations and Friends; for whom you Travail in Birth that you may see Christ formed in them; therefore for your Support and Comfort, I do offer to your Consideration that which now follows. All those that have been from Eternity elected, shall in due season be effectually Called. All that have been by the Father given to Christ shall be brought in to him, and preserved, and carried on to Glory; none can come to Christ except the Father that sent him draw them, but all that are so drawn shall come; their Enmity to him shall be conquer'd, and their Averseness from him removed.

That good Work which is begun in them shall be performed to the Day of Christ, the bruised Reed shall not be broken, nor the Smoking Flax quenched; but Judgment shall be brought forth into Victory, and He that hath been the Author of their Faith will be the Finisher of it. All the Corruptions that are within, and all the Temptations that are from without; all the Enemies upon Earth, and all the Devils in Hell shall not hinder it.

For if it were otherwise, Christ himself would be a loser; He would miss of that which the Father had given him, and fall short of something which he had purchased at a dear Rate; did buy and pay for with no less than his most precious Blood, and sure what cost him such a Price will be valued, and most carefully look'd after.

Again, if any of his People should finally miscarry: He, consider'd as Mystical, would be imperfect, for the Church is called his Body; and in *Eph. 1. 21.* it is said, *To be the fulness of him*
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that filleth all in all. Now if the whole Church should be prevailed against by the Gates of Hell, He would be an Head without a Body, a meer Titular King without Dominions or Subjects; And therefore, when *Hell*, and *Rome*, and the *French King* have done their worst, He will have still a Church upon Earth, and all the Saints are Members of that Body, *Eph. 5. 30. We are Members of his Body, of his Flesh, and of his Bones.* Now if any one of them should be cut off or any way perish, there would be a Member missing, and by Consequence the Body of Christ would be an imperfect and maimed Body.

And to those Things which have been said, let us add this: Those Thoughts of God which have already been accomplished, were of all other the most unlikely to be so. If God the Father, one would think, would have stuck at any thing, He would have stuck at what He hath got over; for He hath parted with that which was best in its self, and dearest to him; the choicest Jewel in his Crown, His own and only Son, that had been always rejoicing before him, and daily his Delight: Having done this, what is it that we can think He will not do! The bestowing of Earth and Heaven, of Grace and Glory upon them is but a small Matter, if compared with his giving of his Son for them.

And then our Lord Jesus Christ hath submitted to, endured and gone thorough that which was hardest for him to bear; He drunk off the very Dregs of that Cup which was of all other the most bitter. He took up that burden which would have broken the back of an Angel, and did put himself into an Agony, and in a cold Night, into a Sweat of Blood. What is any Thing?

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What are all the Things that remain yet to be done, to his leaving the Bosom of his Father? **And** being Incarnate, assuming to himself our Nature with all its sinless Infirmities, his humbling and emptying himself, taking upon him the Form of a Servant, and being made of no Reputation; bearing our Sins in his own Body, being our Surety, and engaging himself to discharge the Debts which we had contracted, and to satisfy for the Offences which we had committed; to that End humbling himself, and becoming obedient to the Death, even the Death of the Cross. And being made Sin for us, tho' he knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him. Here was that which our Reason might have told us, that God and Christ would never have condescended to, and that Grace it self would never stoop so low, nor pay so much for the Redemption of Persons so vile.

But this being done, there is nothing more but what may be done with Ease, and go off with Infinite Pleasure and Delight. When the Mother hath endur'd the Throwes and Pains of Travail, how ready is she to draw the Breast and give Suck to her hungry and smiling Infant. Excellently doth the Holy Apostle argue, in *Rom.* 8. 38. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all Things?* Mark the Word, *All*, all Things, all Necessaries, all good Things, all preparatory good Things in the Way, all satisfactory good in the Countrey, all that will fit them, and all that will fill them. And mark that Word, *Freely*, he will not only do it, but be ready to do it; He will think nothing too Good, too Great,

Great, too Much. How can it be otherwise, *Facilius est, &c.* saith Grotius, *It is more easie for God to give to his Friends, than to his Enemies:* According to that of Paul, Rom. 5. 10. *If when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life.* And saith the same Grotius, *It is easier for God to give all other Things, than his Son; if in a way of Grace there could have been an Averseness from any thing, then there would have been from this; but this being done, we may be sure as to the Rest.*

Lastly, To what hath been said concerning the Eternal Thoughts of God about his People. Let me add, and say something concerning the Tendency of them; and consider, what those blessed and gracious Discoveries of the Divine Purposes may very well produce in the Hearts of those his Servants: And in this I might be large, but choose to confine my Discourse to these Three Particulars.

First, *The Revelation of these Thoughts of God do directly tend to the sweetning of our Lives to us; and to the making our abode in the World more Easie, and our Passage through it more comfortable.* There is indeed much Wormwood laid upon the Breast of present Enjoyments, a great deal to imbitter them, both from Sin within and from Trouble without: Though we have Reason humbly and thankfully to acknowledge, there is nothing near so much as we have deserved there should be; that which is but Wormwood might have been Gall, that which is now mixed with Mercy and hath much to allay it, might have been pure Wrath, and our Lives made up
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of Misery and Wo, and so have been a Lamentation throughout. But though through Mercy matters are not so bad with us, yet as the Case stands, we have Exercises and Trials of Patience; enough to draw sighs from our Hearts, and Tears from our Eyes; and to extort from us Complaints unto God, though not any Complaints of him.

But now here is a Cordial for us in the Time of our Fainting, something to ease us under our greatest Pressures, that which may do us a real Kindness in allaying the bitterness of our present Condition; and not only help us in whatsoever State we are therewith to be Content, but likewise enable us therein to rejoice and Triumph. Though I am low and in the Dust, yet I have been in the Heart of God from all Eternity; though I am Vile, yet Gods Thoughts of me are Precious: Though his present Providences are Dark and Frowning, yet his Purposes are Kind and Gracious. This was a very comfortable Consideration to afflicted *David*, in *Psalms* 40. 13. *I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on me.* And really it may have the same supporting and reviving Influence upon you, when Things seem to make against you. I am Poor and Indigent, but God thinketh on me. I am Sick and Weak, but God thinketh on me. I am in grievous and tormenting Pains, but God thinks on me. I am buffeted by Satan, and worried with Temptations, but God thinks on me. I walk in Darkness and can see no Light, God covers himself with a Cloud, and hides his Face, and doth not give me those gracious visits which He was wont to do, nor so lift up the Light of his Countenance, as thereby to put gladness into my Heart; No, no, He hath withdrawn himself, and is gone,

gone, but still He thinketh of me. This is the Case of every humble, holy, and truly gracious Soul; and let me assure you, it is Ten Thousand Times more desirous, because full out so many Times better to have a Room in the *gracious Thoughts* of God, than to be under the *smiling and comfortable Providences* of God. *Job in Chap. 13. 26.* complained, *That God wrote bitter Things against him.* He dipt his Pen in Gall, but even then, when there is bitterness in the Writing, there is Peace in the Purpose, Honey upon the end of the Rod; the Letter hath in it some harsh Language, and rough Expressions; but let the Son read it to the Bottom, and He shall find it shut up with, *your Loving Father.* And all is well that ends well.

Secondly, *This Revelation of the gracious Thoughts of God concerning us, doth very much tend and contribute to the making our Thoughts of God comfortable to us.* Alas! when a poor Creature is seriously engaged in the great and necessary Work of Self-reflection, and takes a view of its own Heart, and observes those Disorders, Corruptions, and Lusts which are there; how many, and how great they are, and how deservedly they are the Matter of its own Loathing. And when also it takes an Account of its Life, and considers the great and innumerable Transgressions which are there; how contrary it hath walked to the Divine Law, and to its own Profession, and repeated, multiplied Obligations; And then calls to mind the Infinite Holiness of God, the Purity of his Eyes, so that he cannot endure to behold Iniquity, together with his Justice, which renders unto all according as their Works have been, the Thoughts hereof cannot but render
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God exceeding frightful and terrible to him. *Adam* having the guilt of one Sin lying upon him immediately fill'd with Fear, the Voice of God was worse than Thunder, and he endeavoured to hide from him: Well may then a Multitude of Sins produce the same Effect in his guilty and obnoxious Posterity. Poor *Asaph* in *Psalms* 77. 3. saith, *He remembered God and was troubled, He complained, and his Spirit was overwhelmed.* Now there is nothing in God from which He can Suck sweetness and comfort, but all seem to make against them. As thus, He is an Holy God, therefore He cannot but loath and abhor me, who am so polluted and filthy a Sinner. He is a just and a righteous God, therefore He will certainly prosecute and condemn, and punish, and cause his Fury to rest upon me, who am a guilty Malefactor; and though He hath Multitude of tender Mercies, and his Compassions do not fail; yet I have Reason to conclude, that he hath no Mercy for me, because I have so shamefully abused his Mercy, spurned at his yearning Bowels, and turned his Grace into wantonness. Thus doth a poor wounded Spirit inflame its own Wounds, and an oppressed Soul add to that Burden which is already too heavy for it to bear.

But when this poor distressed and sinking Creature, comes to be in some good Measure acquainted with, and satisfied about those gracious Thoughts which God hath from Eternity, had, and still hath of and for it; and such as it is, then it knoweth how to please and solace it self in the Thoughts of him again: As a good Child Delights in thinking and speaking of its loving and tender Father, and a Favourite at Court in the

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the Thoughts of his gracious Prince under whose Smiles he lives; thus we find it was with Holy David, in Psalm 63. He was assured of his Acceptance with God, and Interest in him, and so could with Confidence say, *Verse 1. O God, thou art my God!* Thou art, and thou art better than all, and thou alone art more than all; thou art an infinite God, both as to thy Being and thy Perfections. Other Things are but as the drop of a Bucket, thou art the immense, bottomless, boundless Ocean; thou art the Everlasting God, the *Alpha* and *Omega*, without Beginning and without End. Thou art the immutable God, always the same in thy Self and in thy Purposes, without any variableness or shadow of turning; and which puts a sweetness into all this, thou art my God; thou art God, therein consists thy Glory, thou art my God, and from thence flows my Comfort. And He was satisfied about the Loving-kindness of this God to him, He was sure of it, He had tasted it, He had had large and repeated Experiences of it, which fill'd his Soul with Joy, and his Mouth with Praises; *ver. 3. Because thy Loving-kindness is better than Life, my Lips shall Praise thee.* Now observe, how sweet and pleasant hereupon his own Thoughts of God were to him, in *ver. 5, 6. My Soul shall be satisfied as with Marrow and Fatness, and my Mouth shall Praise thee with joyful-Lips, when I remember thee upon my Bed, and meditate on thee in the Night-Watches.* And at the same Rate he speaks, in Psalm 104. 33, 34. *I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live, I will sing Praise unto my God while I have my Being, my Meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord.*

Yea,

Yea, and the Knowledge, and Remembrance, and believing Consideration of these gracious Thoughts of God, will mightily conduce to the supporting and bearing up of our Spirits, and affording ease to us under all those dark, melancholick, afflictive, troublesome and distracting Thoughts, which too too often croud in upon us, unhinging our Minds, and creating to us a World of Perplexity and Disquiet; this the same Holy Man found by happy Experience, and hath left it upon Record for the Benefit of others, in *Psalms* 94. 19. *In the Multitude of my Thoughts within me, thy Comforts delight my Soul.* Good Man, as his Heart was not without Corruption, nor his Life without Sin; so his House was not as the Light of the Morning when the Sun riseth, not as the Morning without Clouds; no, no, he met with a great many Trials and Exercises, many Troubles and Afflictions, and variety of Dangers even from his Youth, and these various Dangers and Exercises did Cause in him a great many Thoughts; and those Thoughts were an heavy Burden to him, which he labour'd and groan'd under but could not deliver himself from; they soearly oppress'd him, and almost overwhelm'd and sunk him: Yet in the midst of them all he found that which did not only relieve him, but greatly delight him; if you ask, what that was which did it? He tells us it was the Comforts of God, *Thy Comforts delights my Soul*: He did not go for Comfort where he might miss of it, but where he knew it was to be had; namely, in that God, who is the God of all Comfort, and who comforteth his People in all their Tribulations; If the Question again be, What were these Comforts of God? The Answer must be,

be, they were Gospel-Comforts; yea, the Comforts of the Gospel are the Comforts of God. *David* fetch'd his strongest Cordials out of Christ's Banqueting-House, his best Comforts out of those Revelations which God hath been pleased to make of himself and his gracious Purposes; and out of those sweet Promises which He hath made to his People. Our Thoughts of God may very well be comfortable, when we once know that God's Thoughts concerning us are gracious. We may very well rejoice at the remembrance of his Holiness, when we know that very Attribute, in which God is glorious, and which casts so angry and frowning a look upon wicked Transgressors, is reconciled to us and our Friend.

Thirdly, *This Revelation of the gracious Thoughts of God concerning us, is excellent and hearty Food for our Faith to live upon, and doth greatly tend to the promoting in us an holy Confidence in him, and comfortable Expectation from him in all our humble Approaches to him, and Attendance upon him.* Since He loves his People with an Everlasting Love, they may be sure that with Loving kindness He will draw them. When God had once said, in *Jer. 29. 11.* *That he knew the Thoughts which He did think concerning his People Israel;* and with all assured them, that they were Thoughts of Peace and not of Evil, to give an expected End, he immediately subjoin'd, in *ver. 11, 12.* *Ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and Pray unto me, and I will hearken to you, and ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with your whole Heart.* What he told them of should be their Encouragement to seek, and when they sought they might promise themselves to find; their Prayers should not be in vain, because his Purposes

ses should not be abortive : You may upon the same Account learn both Faith and Fervency in Prayer.

Knowing that the Thoughts of God concerning his People are gracious, and that your selves are some of them ; you may Comfort your selves with the Hope, that your Entertainment with him will be gracious too. Since He never said to the *Seed of Jacob*, *Seek ye me in vain* ; you being some of that Seed, may hope that your seeking shall not be in Vain : But you shall be *Israel's* Princes and prevail with God, and as God thinks good, so he will please to do it. And hereupon you may approach the Throne of Grace with an holy Boldness, and put up your Requests to God with a believing Expectation, as knowing there will be sent into you from Heaven a gracious Answer : So likewise, when you go to the *Lords Table*, to hold Communion with him and his People, in that sacred and solemn Ordinance of the Sacrament ; you may expect an hearty welcome and gracious Reception, that he will then lead you into his Banqueting-House, spread his Banner over you, and give you of his Loves. *I will hear*, said *David*, Psalm 85. 8. *What God the Lord will speak, for He will speak Peace to his People, and to his Saints.* Such is his Heart toward them, such his Thoughts for them, therefore such will be his Language and Expressions.

These Thoughts of God may very well encourage the Heart, and raise the Faith of his Children, and their Faith being raised it will raise their Expectations ; when Faith is high, the Expectation will not be low : And according to the Degree of the Expectation will be the measure of the Comfort which it affords. The more any

one

one Trusts in God, the more good he looks for from him; and the more good he looks for from God, the more he doth and will rejoice in him. Since the Thoughts of God concerning them are good, his Providences also shall be for good; even those that are most dark, and have the most frowning Aspect, and so shall Ordinances too: God will carry toward them, and Act for them as a Friend, when his Way is in the Sea, therefore for certain He will do it, when his way is in the Sanctuary: Indeed, *All Things shall Work together for good to them that love God*: They shall work together with God as Instruments in his Hand, and together with one another. And they do so, because *they are the called according to his Purpose*, Rom. 8. 28. Namely, his Eternal Purpose: What was the Matter of Gods Eternal Purpose, shall be the Matter of his Prosecution in Time, the Business of his Providence is to bring to pass his Purposes, till he hath fulfilled his whole Pleasure, and all his gracious Thoughts have had their Accomplishment: But I will add one Thing more by Way of Information.

Fourthly, *We may from hence gather the Misery and dreadful Condition of Wicked Men.* I mean, those of them that Live and Die so, in their Impenitency and Unbelief, who being born with their Backs upon God, do make it the Work of their Life to go further and further from him.

I do not, I cannot deny but God hath *gracious* Thoughts concerning many, who for the present are *graceless* Persons, notwithstanding their being in their Blood, and their deserving to be cast out to the loathing of their Persons; yet he makes it a Time of Love, not indeed as yet a Love of Delight and Complacency, but of

Benevolence and Good-will. Though he hates their Sins with an irreconcilable hatred, yet he hath a Kindness for their Persons; though they are under the Curse and Condemnation of the Law, and have Reason to fear their own utter and everlasting Ruin, not knowing how soon Execution may be done upon them by the Hand of revenging Justice, which always hath them within its reach: Yet still I say, as to many of them God hath had and continueth to have very gracious Thoughts; while they are in actual War with him he hath Thoughts of Peace to them.

This doth evidently appear by the blessed Change he is pleased to make in them, turning them powerfully, yet sweetly from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan to himself; bowing their stubborn Wits, and mollifying their hard Hearts, and breathing spiritual Life into them, who were dead in Trespasses and Sins, calling them now into his Kingdom, with a Resolution of bringing them in due season to his Glory

You have heard and read what a vile Wretch *Saul* had been, and what a desperate cruel Enemy to our blessed Saviour the Lord of Life and Glory; how much He hated him and all that did profess his Name, haling them to Prisons and making havock of the Church: He afterward humbly acknowledged himself to have been a Persecuter, a Blasphemer and Injurious; yet for all this the Lord told *Ananias*, Acts 9. 15. *That he was a chosen Vessel unto him, to bear his Name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and Children of Israel.* *Prædestinatus ad gratiam & gloriam*, chosen to Grace and Glory; chosen to great and singu-

lar Service, both in an active Way and passive too, chosen to be an excellent Preacher of Christ and as great a Sufferer for him.

From hence it doth naturally follow that the worst of Men, the greatest of Sinners have no Reason to despair of Mercy; but may be encouraged to sit under the sound and call of the Gospel, and to wait upon God in the use of instituted Means: Let them lie at the Pool, for Salvation may come at Last, and a Cure may be wrought, and it will be welcome when it comes.

And you gracious and holy Parents that have stubborn and rebellious Children, who harden their Hearts against the Fear of God, and will regard neither Instruction nor Correction; but are resolved upon their Way, and drink in Iniquity like Water; you do and cannot but mourn over them, but do not Despair, as Hard and Adamantine as their Hearts are, they may be Dissolved, and as far as they are gone, and as near as they are got to Hell, they may be reduced. Those who are now your *Benonies*, the Sons of your Sorrow, may happily turn to be your *Benjamins*, the Sons of your Right Hand; there is a Possibility left, you do not know what Thoughts God hath for them, nor what is laid up in the Divine Counsel concerning them; their Chains may be broken, and these Captives of the Mighty may be delivered: Therefore do you continue to pray for them, as *Abraham* did, *O that my Ishmael might live in thy sight*, and go on to Counsel, Exhort and Perswade them; leave no Stone unturned, but put forth your utmost endeavours, and use all the Means you can for the reclaiming them from the Errour of their Way, and turning them to the Wisdom of the Just.

But as for you that have to this Day lived in your Sins, and been Deaf to the Voice of your Instructors; and to the Calls of God, and the checks of your own Consciences, hating to be Reformed, so long as you go on at this Rate, you have just Cause to fill with Fear, and whensoever you remember God you may be troubled, your Thoughts of him may be dreadful and put you into an Agony; yea, while his Thoughts are precious to a *David*, highly cordial and comfortable to an Holy Man or Woman, they may be terrible to you, and have the same Effect upon you, that the Hand-writing on the Wall had upon *Belshazzar*; Dan. 5. 6. *When his Countenance was changed, and his Thoughts troubled him, so that the Joints of his Loins were loosed, and his Knees smote one against another.* Thus it may very well be upon a Threefold Account, which I heartily Pray may be accompanied by the Divine Spirit, and so come with Power upon your Spirits, and abide with you in order to your Awakening and Amendment.

First, *God thinks of all the Sins which you have been guilty of in the whole Course of your Lives:* There are indeed standing upon Record in the Scripture many sweet and gracious Promises, which He hath made to his People about the Pardon of theirs; and there is great Variety of Expressions which He useth to such a Purpose; namely, *Casting them behind his Back*, Isa. 38. 17. While they themselves are continually before him, *Casting all their Sins into the depths of the Sea*, Mic. 7. 19. So deep that they shall never be fetch'd up again, all their Sins shall be drown'd in the Sea, that none of their Persons may be drown'd in Perdition. *Though they be as Scarlet, they shall be as Snow,*

Snow, though like Crimson they shall be as Wooll, Isa. 1. 18. Deep-dyed Sins, Sins in Grain shall be taken out, and be as if they had never been. *That He will be merciful to their Unrighteousness, and their Sins and Iniquities He will remember no more.* Heb. 8. 12. Not that He is subject to forgetfulness, but the meaning is this; God will not remember them to their Everlasting Reproach, not so remember them as to Charge them upon them to their Condemnation. All these Expressions we find in the Holy Scriptures, and all these Assurances God hath given his People; and these believing, repenting Sinners may live upon, as excellent Food for their Faith and Joy, and carry them to the Throne of Grace, and there Plead them with God for a Pardon.

But seriously Study the Matter, search these Scriptures, and see if there be any of this Nature promised to an impenitent, incorrigible Sinner, who continueth in the hardness of his Heart; Is there any Word of Comfort spoken to him in the whole Book of God? Nay, doth it not expressly tell him, in *Rom. 2. 5, 6. That he Treasures up to himself Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, who will render unto every Man according to his Deeds?*

It is true, you forget a great many of your Sins. You commit them and when you have done so, you do not think of them any more, you do not repent of them, you are not troubled for them; *Jer. 8. 6. I bearkened and heard but they spake not aright, no Man repented of his Wickedness, saying, What have I done?* But though you do not mind but forget them, yet God thinks of them; your open Sins and your secret ones too,

your later Sins and your former Sins too. Instead of being cast behind Gods back, they are all in the Light of his Countenance; *Psalm 90. 8. Thou hast set our Iniquities before thee, and our secret Sins in the Light of thy Countenance.* Yea, and he can when he pleaseth make you feel the smart of them, and what was as a pleasant Morsel in the Commission, shall be as Wormwood and Gall in the Review; *Job 13. 26. Thou writest bitter Things against me, and makest me to possess the Iniquities of my Youth.* God can make Persons read over, and call to mind those Sins which they had committed long before; and then they will prove pressing Burdens, too heavy for you to bear. Let young Ones remember and consider this, when they are tempted to Sin, Oh what may this cost me! The Sins of Youth may be the Sufferings and Torments of Age. And further, Let me desire you to read, and ponder upon that Passage, in *Jer. 2. 22. Though thou wash thee with Nitre, and take unto thee much Soap, yet thy Iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God.* Use never so many Means, make never so many Excuses, Plead what thou wilt for thy self, the Stain remains, thou art branded. There is such a mark of Iniquity upon Thee as will abide, nothing in all the World will avail to the fetching of it out, but the Tears of godly Sorrow, and the precious Blood of Christ applied by Faith. I beseech you, work this upon your Hearts by serious and repeated Meditation, that the great and holy God doth so remember, and think upon all your Sins, as that He can *set them in order before your Eyes.* For so to do he threatens, in *Psalm 50. 21.* When they were committed, and where, and with what aggravating Circumstances.

Secondly,

Secondly, *God thinks of all his own Goodness which hath been despised by you, and of his manifold Mercies which have been abused by you.* He remembers what Patience he hath exercised in waiting for your Reformation and Return, what Pains He hath taken, and what means he hath used in order therunto. Such a Relation, and such a Friend he hath sent to deal with you; at such a Time He hath put your own Consciences upon reproving and checking you, and at another Time, yea, Time after Time his blessed Spirit hath striven with you, and you have resisted and refused; one while he would have drawn you from a Course of Sin to the performance of Duty, and home to himself by the Cords of a Man and Acts of Kindness, but then you waxed wanton, and spurned at his Bowels. At another Time he would have driven you by Affliction, but then you were as a Bullock unaccustomed to the Yoak; and the more you were smitten, the more you did revolt: Such choice Seasons and golden Opportunities He put into your Hands, but them you foolishly and wilfully squandred away; such Talents He intrusted you with, with which, if you had wisely improved them, you might have glorified him, and for ever enriched your selves; but them you did either wickedly imbezzle, or slothfully Bury in a Napkin. Such a Sermon was Preached to you at such a Time, and therein was Thundering against the Life you lead, and Curses and Judgments denounced against the Sins you live in; and at another Time such a Sermon was Preached to you, wherein the Grace of the Gospel was displayed, and the goodness of God in Christ was caused to pass before you. There was a *Boanerges* with his Terrours, here a *Barnabas* with

with his Consolations, and for the present both the one and the other made some Impression upon you; but that Impression which was made did not last, but quickly wore out again: There did on a sudden spring up a Sense of Sin, and Fear of Wrath; and some shame and sorrow for past Sins, and some good Thoughts and Purposes for the Future; but all these withered again, and nothing was brought to Perfection. While you sat under the Sound, there were some startlings and some stirrings, but you quickly cast all behind your Back; returning to your former vicious Practices, as the Dog doth to his Vomit, and the Sow to her wallowing in the Mire.

You Sinners do not keep Count of these Things, but the great God doth, *Deut. 32. 34. It is all laid up in store with him, and sealed up among his Treasures*; and he will certainly reckon with you for them, unless you timely make your Peace. Hence you meet with such Passages as these, *1 Kings 11. 9. The Lord was angry with Solomon, because his Heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice. Isa. 5. 4. What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done to it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth Grapes, it brought forth wild Grapes. Luke 13. 7. These Three Years have I come seeking Fruit on this Fig-tree and find none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground. Take one Place more, Jer. 6. 29, 30. The bellows are burnt, the Lead is consumed of the Fire, the Founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate Silver shall Men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them. And what will you have to say for your selves when God*

God comes to deal thus with you, what are those strong Reasons which you will have to produce in order to the bringing you off with Credit or in Safety. You forget these Things now, and both Gods dealings with you, and your Carriages towards him you bury in Oblivion; the Sermons you have sate under, are as if you had never heard them; and the Convictions you have lien under, are as if they had never been; and the Promises by which in the Days of your Trouble and Distress you have bound your Souls, are as if you had never made them, all are quite forgotten by you, but know God still thinks of them: And for every one of these Things, *He will bring you into Judgment, Eccles. 11. 9.*

Thirdly, *The just and righteous God hath his Thoughts imploied about your certain and approaching Ruine.* You, Sinners, cannot indure to find your own Thoughts ingaged; you do not by any means Love to mind Death that King of Terrours, nor Judgment, at which you must give up your Account, nor Eternity in which your State will be unalterable, nor Hell where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth. These are too serious, black, and melancholick Subjects for any of your Airy and Jovial Temper, willingly and out of choice to entertain your selves with. Or if at any Time, the Thoughts of these Things break in upon you, and make a forcible Entry; they are as welcome as Water into a Ship, and you endeavour to perswade your selves, that they are at a great Distance from you. Thus they in *Amos 6. 3. Put far away the Evil Day.* Not that they really did it, but only fancied it: *De conatu loquitur, non de eventu.* The Prophet speaks of their Endeavour, not of the Event.

But

But however it is with you, know it is far otherwise with God; He thinks how he shall ere long be avenged on you. Now you will not be obedient, and He will punish you for your disobedience; now you break his Law, and He will break your Hearts: You do now dishonour his Name, and He will glorifie himself upon you in your Destruction. Now you will have your sinning Day, and He will be sure to have his punishing Day. In a Word, now you say to him, depart from us, and he will say to you, depart from me ye Workers of Iniquity. Thus *Isa. 1. 24. Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the mighty one of Israel, ah, I will ease me of mine Adversaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies.* I find some look upon these Words, as *verba insultantis*, the Words of one insulting, and pleasing of himself in the foresight of what he would afterward bring to pass. I am now weary to bear them, I am tired out with their wicked Carriages, I am prest under their Sins, as a Cart is prest that is laden with Sheaves, as He elsewhere complains; but there is a Time coming, yea, hastening, wherein it shall be otherwise, I will ease my self; or as some render it, *Consolabor*, I will be comforted, I will comfort my Self, the utter Confusion of these Wretches shall be my Consolation. So it is said, *Psalms 37. 12, 13. The Wicked plotteth against the Just, and gnasheth upon him with his Teeth, the Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his Day is coming.* The Day of his overthrow and ruine, the Day in which his Plots shall be blasted, and his Teeth broken; yea, and his Arm and Neck too. God hath appointed and set the Day, he sees it in his own Purpose and Resolve; he sees it is coming, and
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when it is come he will not let it slip, when the Day is once come, the Work of the Day shall be done: And God sees this Wicked Man tho' now high, and active, and triumphing in the greatness of his Confidence, yet to be no other than a condemned Criminal upon the Scaffold, very near to his Execution; and while God sees and thinks of this, He doth it with infinite Pleasure and Delight; for He laughs at him, to see what a Fool He is at present, and how miserable He shall be at last. Let so much suffice to be spoken to the Use of Information; and oh that all who read what hath been said, may thereby learn to be wise for their Souls! We now proceed to another Use, which shall be by way of Exhortation, and will divide it self into Four Branches. And the First is this, Since God hath had from all Eternity, and still hath such gracious Thoughts of, and for his People.

Use I. Exhortation.

First, *Let us by way of grateful Return make it our Work and Delight to think of God.* It is our Duty, and very much our Interest, and by Consequence no less our Wisdom to mind, and take Notice of Gods Carriage toward us; and to make it our Study and Endeavour to answer it, and to carry our selves toward him in a sweet suitableness thereunto; that there may not be a contrariety, but a pleasant Harmony and Agreement. As thus, doth he love us, we again should love him; hath he chosen us, we should make him our Choice too: Are the Eyes of the Lord upon the Righteous, then it is fit that the Eyes of the Righteous should be upon the Lord. *David could say that his were so, Psalm 16. 8. I have set the Lord always before me. Psalm 25. 15. Mine Eyes*

Eyes are ever toward the Lord. So in the present Case, since God doth think of us, we again should think of him.

The Pravity and Corruption of the Heart of Man doth very much discover it self in the vanity and sinfulness of his Thoughts, as it is an evident Sign of a great deal of foulness in the Pot, when there is much of a thick and filthy Scum arising and floating upon the Top of it, *Jer. 4. 14. O Jerusalem wash thine Heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved, how long shall thy vain Thoughts lodge within thee!* The Heart must be wash'd from wickedness, or the Mind will not be kept pure. It is indeed during our present State altogether impossible for us to shut vain Thoughts quite out of our Minds, for they will forcibly make their own way, and come in whether we will or not; yea, they will be crowding in upon us, when we have other Work to do. As when, according to Gods Order, the Heifer, and Goat, and Ram, and Fowls were divided, and the pieces were laid one against another, *The Fowls would be coming down upon the Carcasses, Gen. 15. 11.* But then, *Abraham drove them away.* And so we ought to do, when vain Thoughts come into our Minds, specially if engaged about sacred and solemn Work; we should by no means bid them welcome, nor suffer them to abide with us, but get rid of them as soon as we can. They were very troublesome and unacceptable Guests to Holy *David*, they were abhorred by him as the *Jebusites*, and the *Lame*, and the *Blind*, that inhabited in *Zion*, *2 Sam. 5. 6.* Therefore He could say, and that in Truth; *I hate vain Thoughts*, though he had them, yea, too many of them, yet he hated them, *Psalms 119.*
113. And

And there is very great Reason, why we should keep a strict watch over our selves, and take singular Care of our Thoughts; because they have the highest and most noble Parts of Man for the Seat and Subject of them, our Minds I mean: And it is a thousand Pities, that they should be defiled. And the Thoughts are the most immediate Product and Issue of the Soul, they are its first-born, and do more plainly discover the true State and Temper of it than Words and Actions do; a Man may sometimes speak contrary to his Mind, and Act also contrary: He may be under a force and powerful Constraint, He may be carried out to it by By-ends, Fear, or Hope, or Shame, may compel him to it; but Thoughts are free from being influenced by Things of that Nature, the Soil it self affords them. And therefore by them you may come to have a right Knowledge of, and to pass a right Judgment upon your selves: You may by this means come to understand which is predominant in you, a Principle of Grace or a Principle of Sin; and if Sin, then what Sin, what is the Constitution or Complection-Sin, your Iniquity, the *Peccatum in deliciis*, the darling, bosom and beloved Sin; that is most natural to you, that most often return, that staies and abides longest with you, being most welcome and grateful.

Therefore make choice of God, as the chief Object of your Meditation; let your Minds run out to him, and fix most upon him. Turn away your Eyes and Minds from the Vanities here below, to his Beauty and Glory which doth invite you, and is above all others most worthy your beholding. When in a Morning you awake
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be with him, yea, and that continually too, both every Day, and all the Day; with all your Work and Business in the Day mingle Thoughts of God, these will sanctifie and sweeten it; whatever Friends and Company you Converse with, let him make one; and when you lie down in your Bed at Night commit your Souls to him, that when you shall awake again in the Morning you may find them with him. In order hereunto, I shall propound to your Consideration only these two Things, the Excellency of the Object, and the Greatness of the Advantage which you will reap thereby.

First, *God is the best, most excellent and glorious Object about which your Minds can possibly be employed.* It is indeed too too true, as we find by sad and repeated Experience, that we are extream backward to ingage herein, even as an Idle Truantly Boy is to go to School, or a Bear to be led to the Stake; yea, and so it is with us as to every Thing of a spiritual Nature and Import, that tends to the Good and Profit of our Soul. Thus People generally are as unwilling to search into their Hearts, and take an Account of their Lives and Actions; as a poor Creature is to rake in his Wounds and Soars, or as a Tradesman that finds himself ready to break, is to cast up his Shop, or look into his Books: As much afraid they are to think of Death that King of Terroures, as one guilty of High Treason is of the Sessions or Assizes, where he shall be tried for his Life, and knoweth that a Sentence of Condemnation will be pronounced against him. So a guilty Sinner is as loath and averse from thinking of God, as a Malefactor is of the Judge, who must shortly sit upon his Life; or as Wicked *Abab*

was

was to meet the Prophet *Elijah*, after he had taken the Possession of *Natob's* Vineyard; and cried out, *1 Kings* 21. 20. *Hast thou found me, O mine Enemy?* And it is from hence, that Men and Women are said not to like, *to retain God in their Knowledge*, *Rom.* 1. 28. They do not care to have right Notions of him, nor to remember him, nor to keep up any Acquaintance, Converse, and Familiarity with him; but rather would shut the Door against him, and say unto him, *Depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways*, *Job* 21. 14. Saints know not how to be without him, that is an uncomfortable Sabbath in which they do not enjoy God; that a dry and empty Ordinance, in which they do not meet with God; and therefore their Prayer is, *Leave us not*, but others would rather have his Room than his Company: And accordingly, when he doth make a near Approach and forcible Entry into their Minds, they being very uneasie will cry out, *Depart from us*. And what is the Reason, that many among us cannot endure to be alone; but because, when they remember God they are troubled, and therefore would not by any means have the Thoughts of him, lay hold upon Privacy and Solitude, as an Opportunity to break in upon them to their Disquiet. But this doth plainly prove, and loudly Proclaim the degeneracy and miserable Condition into which Apostate Man is sunk, it is an undeniable Evidence of the wretched Corruption and depravedness of his Nature, and of that guilt which is a tormenting Sting in his Conscience.

For of a Truth, the great and holy God is the most excellent Object that the Mind of Man can be Conversant about, the most amiable and love-

ly Object that the Heart of Man can fix upon; in him is the most admirable and ravishing Beauty, that the Eye of Man can behold: In him is an immense, bottomless, boundless Ocean of Goodness, in which the most enlarged and capacious Soul, both may and shall to all Eternity Sport its self without the least weariness; here the inquisitive Mind may be still making further Discoveries, and by Consequence meeting with fresh Delights; *Job 11. 7. Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to Perfection?* No, that is above a Creatures reach, thou maiest find him out to Salvation, but none of all the Angels in Heaven can find him out to Perfection. It is Gods own Happiness to know himself to Perfection, it is his Peoples Happiness to know him to their Satisfaction; what is it that the holy and blessed Angels are so much delighted in, but the Contemplation of God, and beholding of his Face; and what was it that our dear Lord Jesus was so greatly set for, on the behalf of those whom his Father had given him, but that *John 17. 24. They might be with him where He is, and so behold his Glory.* As if that alone were Heaven enough, and Happiness enough. And indeed take a Person that hath really had a sight of God and of his Glory, a taste of him and his incomparable sweetness, and it will without any hesitance and Demurre, Love and Choose to fix and continue where it is, to dwell upon God and with him. Even as it was with *Peter*, when upon Mount *Tabor* at the sight of our Lords Transfiguration; He was so transported, and even besides, or rather above himself, that he cried out, *Bonum est esse hic*, it is good to be here: Not then considering, that this Life is not the

Time,

Time, and this World is not the Place for the Eternal Abode, and the Consummation of their Happiness. I should rather have chosen heartily to join with good Old *Simeon*, in that which is called his *Cyanea cantio*, or Swan-like Song; He had long, and with longing waited for the Consolation of *Israel*, in the personal Appearance of the promised *Messiah*; and having once got him in his Arms, he lovingly and with joy embrac'd and hugg'd him, and not deeming it worth his while to stay any longer in a polluted and troublesome World, he was ready and desirous to take his last Farewel of all Things here below, and having got his Freight to set up his Sail for the other and better World, yea, He seemed to be in Post-haste to be gone, *Luke 2. 28, 29.* Lord, now, yea, now presently, the sooner the better; he did not care for staying a Day longer, no, not an Hour! Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in Peace; for mine eyes have seen thy Salvation.

Secondly, *Singular Benefit and exceeding great Advantage will accrue and be brought over to us by a serious and frequent minding of God:* For such Thoughts of him do directly tend to, and will infallibly issue in the bettering of the Soul. Those who do familiarly converse together are like to one another, their mutual Converse is an Argument or Evidence of their Agreement and Harmony; they would not so much Love and Delight to be together, were it not upon that account, *Amos 2. 3.* Can two walk together except they were agreed? It is Birds of a Feather that flock together. And this their Converse together doth augment and increase that their likeness: He that is a Companion of Fools can himself be little better; but he that walketh with wise

men will be wise ; He will gain something by their Discourses, and something by their Examples : As he that comes into a Room where there are sweet Scents, will carry away some of the Saviour.

Now serious thinking of God is a special Way and Means of conversing with God. The Soul is with God when its Thoughts are upon him ; *David* said, *When I am awake I am still with thee*, *Psal.* 139. 18. How was that ? God was with *David* by his watchful Providence, by his gracious and comforting Spirit ; and *David* was with God by his holy Thoughts and Meditations ; and by this means the Gracious Soul comes to increase its acquaintance with God ; it sees him more clearly, and knows him more fully, and groweth up into a great familiarity and intimacy with him ; the more it thinks of God, the more shall it know him, and the more doth it know how to prize and value him, and the more doth it know how to improve him, and make use of him, as its occasions do require.

And then, As this thinking of God doth much promote the Christians knowledge of him, and acquaintance with him ; so it will no less add to its Conformity to him ; being with God is the compendious and ready way to a being assimilated to him ; the holding of a Burning-Glass with a steady hand in the Beams of the Sun, doth quickly fire that Combustible Matter into which those Beams were directed ; so the holding and keeping of the Soul in the Presence of God, by a continued Meditation, is an excellent, choice and effectual way for the melting of the Heart, the spiritualizing it, and kindling in it an holy Heat, a Divine Flame. When *Moses* had been by the

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space of Forty Days in the Mount with God, his Face shone at his coming down again, for he brought with him something of a Glory.

What is the Reason of that unspotted Purity and perfect Holiness which is in the Angels and Saints above, but their being always with God, and always beholding of him; whereas there is nothing of God to be seen in wicked Men, because they are altogether without him in the World: And there is too too little of God visible even in good Men themselves, because they are chargeable with too great Estrangedness from him. In the Mansions above it will be far otherwise, *viz.* a clear Vision, a full Fruition, a close Communion, and a perfect Conformity, the blessed Result of all these. This *David* with highest Confidence promised to himself, *Psalms* 17. 15. *As for me, I will behold thy Face in Righteousness, I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy Likeness.* There you have the Work of Heaven, that is, beholding the pleased, smiling, gracious, glorious Face of God, here is also the Effect of the beholding that Face, *viz.* a likeness in *David* unto God, and then the Consequent of that likeness; *viz.* Satisfaction. I shall be as like him as I am capable of being, and in being so I shall be as Happy as I would be; nor will this be the blessedness of *David* alone, but that in which all the Children of God shall be Comportioners, *John* 1. 32. *Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as He is.* Here again we have that Perfection, unto which at the second Appearance of Christ his People shall be advanced, which shall for ever be continued to them, they

shall be like Christ; namely, in his Grace, and in his Glory: Here likewise is laid down the Reason of the Thing, or the way by which this is brought about, *For we shall see him as He is:* Then they shall see him as they would, and thereupon they shall resemble as they would there; as was said, the sight of him will be plain and clear, and the Conformity to him complete and full. There is something to this Purpose done in the present Life. The Saints similitude unto God is more or less, according to those sights which they have of God; 2 Cor. 3. 18. *We all with open Face, beholding as in a glass the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* The first sight of God begins that blessed change, further sights increase, and the Heavenly Vision perfects it. Delightful Thoughts and Meditations upon God evidence the Holiness of the Soul, the frequent repeating of them advanceth it to the highest pitch, from Grace to Grace, till it come to rise up from Grace to Glory.

II. *Exhortation.*

So much may suffice to be spoken to the first Exhortation, I proceed to the Second, in which *I do advise, counsel, and beseech you to Study and Acquaint your selves well with the Thoughts of God concerning you.* Those Thoughts of his I mean, which He hath been pleased to reveal in the most Holy Scripture, which I may very well call the Transcript, or Copying out the Mind and Heart of God. I do very well remember what our blessed Saviour spake to his Disciples concerning the Times, when they asked him, whether he would at that Time restore the Kingdom to *Isra-*

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el. He answer'd, *Acts. 1. 7. It is not for you to know the Times and the Seasons, which the Father hath put in his own Power; and still keeps so, lock'd up among his Treasures. But there are Times which God hath put into his Peoples Power, He hath been pleased to reveal and make them known; and it is their Duty accordingly to search into them, and enquire about them: Though indeed some Holy and Learned Men are not to be commended, not to be justified in their being too too positive and peremptory in their Determinations* *Daniel* set himself to find out the Time, which the *Jews* were to spend in *Babylonish* Captivity. So as to the Time of *Antichrists* Reign and Ruine, *Babylons* flourishing and falling, the Time is fixed, and the People of God should be diligent in their search after it, and modest in their foretelling it; but it shall certainly come to pass at the Time appointed, yea, and before the Accomplishment God will bless his Servants Inquiries with further and clearer Discoveries; *Dan. 12. 4. Shut up the Words and Seal the Book, even to the Time of the End, many shall run to and fro, and Knowledge shall be increased.*

I may speak much at the same Rate as to the Thoughts of God; there are some Wise, Holy and Precious Thoughts of God, which He hath been pleased to draw a Vail over, and to keep concealed in his Breast. And we must be contented that they should still lie where they are, being satisfied with the Account he gives us of them in General. As in *Jer. 29. 11. I know the Thoughts that I think toward you, Thoughts of Peace and not of Evil, to give you an expected End. I will not fail your Expectations, but be as good as your Hopes, and better too.* L 4 It

It is not safe for any to pry into the Ark, such a look of Curiosity hath been fatal, and punished with Death. It is not allowed any to aspire and reach after a being wise above that which is Written. It is a Sin in them that go to Astrologers or Star-gazers, to enquire of them what shall happen. It is Presumption in others to determine when the End of this World shall be, or when shall the Day of Judgment come. It is far better to spend our Time in a constant Expectation thereof, and diligent Preparation for it, to live every Day as if it were our Last, and we were immediately to make our Appearance before the Tribunal of our Judge. Whether we are Elect, and from Eternity chosen of God, is not a Question to be ask'd. We are not able to mount Aloft, and Ascend up into Heaven, and search the Records there; we cannot read the Lambs Book of Life, that is a sealed Book, and altogether beyond our Power to open it. God hath indeed, O Man, O Woman, in his Word shewn thee what is good, and what that is which He requires of thee. Read it thy self, 2 Pet. 1. 10. *Give Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure.* This is a safe and sure Way, this is the best Method that you can possibly take, this is beginning at the right End; and so you Promise your selves, that you shall speed and come to a right Understanding of a Matter so momentous and important: Look to that which is done in thine own Heart, and if thou canst indeed find any thing there, that is of a sanctifying saving Nature; thou maiest from thence certainly and comfortably Conclude, that from all Everlasting God had gracious Purposes concerning thee. If thou art once sure of thy having been effectually Called,

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Called, thou maiest from thence assure thy self that thou hast been eternally Elected, 1 *Thef.* 1. 4, 5. *Knowing, Brethren beloved, your Election of God, for our Gospel came unto you, not in Word only, but also in Power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much Assurance.* In a Word, if thou art indeed as a living Stone built upon *that Foundation which God hath laid in Sion*: Built, I mean, upon *Jesus Christ by Faith*; then thou maiest rejoice in the full Perswasion and Confidence of this, that thou art built upon *that Foundation which God hath laid in Heaven*, and stands sure; having this Seal, *the Lord knoweth them that are his*, 2 *Tim.* 2. 19.

But now, when I exhort you to Study and Acquaint your selves well with the Thoughts of God concerning you; I would have you to understand it of those Thoughts, which God hath been pleased to reveal and make known in his Word; many of them exceeding sweet and gracious we do find laid down there with a great deal of plainness, *viz.* those of pardoning Mercy, pardoning abundantly, casting our Iniquities behind Gods back, and into the Depths of the Sea, Gods being merciful to the Unrighteousness of his Covenant-People, and remembering their Sins no more. Promises of healing their Backslidings, and Loving them freely. Promises of giving Christ for Sinners and to them, and of giving Sinners to Christ. Promises of his Holy Spirit, yea, of pouring him out. Promises of bestowing on his People Grace here, with further Increases of it, and growth in it, together with a Crown of Life and Righteousness and Glory at the Last. There are many of them, very many, exceeding great and precious, in
which

which God hath abounded. Now these, O Saints do belong to you, you are concerned in them, and therefore you ought to concern your selves with them. So *Moses* did of Old tell *Israel*, Deut. 29. 29. *The Secret Things belong unto the Lord our God, but those Things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our Children for ever.* Gods gracious and eternal Purposes revealed, that we might take the Comfort of them, and make them the Matter of our rejoicing. His Holy, Just, and Good Commandments are revealed, that we might obey them, and make them the rule of our Lives and Actions. His dreadful Threatnings are revealed that we might tremble before them, and not by our wilful Transgressions draw the Execution of them upon our selves; and his Promises are revealed, that we might Act our Faith upon them, drawing out their Sweetness and Strength for our Support in Trouble, and Encouragement in Duty. All is designed, intended, and provided for our Benefit and Advantage one way or another. So the Apostle *Paul* tells us in *Rom.* 15. 4. *Whatsoever Things were written aforetime, were written for our Learning, that we through Patience and Comfort of the Scripture might have hope.* And God takes it exceeding ill at the Hands of the Children of Men, and is highly provok'd, when these Things are slighted by them and disregarded; as you may see, *Hosea* 8. 12. *I have written to him the great Things of my Law, great in themselves, and great in my Esteem, but they were counted as a strange Thing.* They slighted them as inconsiderable, and of no Moment as to them; and after the same Manner do too many among us deal with the great and excellent Things of the Everlasting Gospel, even

as they did with the great Things of his Law. They are Strangers to them, and are very willing to continue so; whereas we should make it our Work and Business to acquaint our selves with them, to grow up into an Intimacy, our Souls should be very Familiar with the Holy Word of God, and all the precious Truths of God. They should talk with us when we wake, and walk with us when we go abroad; they should keep us Company at our Lying down, and at our Rising up, and be our Meditation Day and Night. Hence that Command, *Col. 3. 16. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, plentifully, abundantly.* Get as great a Knowledge of it, and as clear an insight into it as you can; and let it have all the Power and Command over you that it should. Thus I exhort you to Study well the Thoughts of God revealed in his Word.

Quest. Here now some one or more may be ready to propound this serious and great Question, How may a Person come to know that God hath had from all Eternity gracious Thoughts concerning him?

Ans. Hereunto I Answer thus briefly. You may know it by looking into your own Hearts, and enquiring, what kind of Thoughts those are which you have of God, and bid welcome to, and cherish. This I take for granted, that there are none of you who have heard of a God, and do believe his Being; but have Thoughts of him more or less, at one Time or another. I do believe there are none in this numerous Congregation, none I say, so bad, so vile, but sometimes the Thoughts of God come into their Minds; but when Thoughts of him do come, what Entertainment

tertainment do they meet with, are they hugg'd by you and embrac'd ; are you most pleas'd with your selves, and glad at Heart when your Minds are thus imploied and taken up.

But let me further inquire, what are those Thoughts of God which you rejoyce in and bid welcome to ; do you like and approve of Holy and becoming Thoughts far more than vain and foolish ones, more than sinful and worldly ones? I know there are a Company of wretched Thoughts that will be frequently knocking at the Door, and forcing their way into the Minds of gracious Persons. Atheistical Thoughts, blasphemous Thoughts, unbelieving Thoughts, discontented Thoughts ; but when they do come in they are as an heavy Burden, too heavy for the Soul to bear: He would fain get rid of them, he is quite weary of them, and of himself ; yea, and of his Life too, because of them. *David* was a very Holy Man, but he was not a perfect Man ; a Man after Gods own Heart, yet his Heart was not thoroughly washed from its filthiness: He could not say, he had no vain Thoughts ; for poor Man, he had too many, but he could in Truth say, he did hate them ; *Psalms* 119. 113. Is this the Temper of your Soul, this the Frame of your Spirit? If so, it is a good Sign and speaks comfortably to you. But I shall proceed in the Case a little more particularly. What are those Thoughts of God which are most acceptable and pleasant to you?

First, *Are they God-honouring Thoughts?* Such as do prefer and exalt him above all the World beside, do set him in the Throne, and Place the Crown upon his Head, as the chiefest good, and make all other Things his Foot-stool ; so that the
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Soul takes up with him, and acquiesceth in him, as one in whom it concludes there is enough to delight, to satisfie, yea, and to fill it. Such were those Thoughts, in *Psalm 16. 5, 6. The Lord is the Portion of mine Inheritance and of my Cup, thou maintainest my Lot.* There you see his Faith in God, the Assurance he had of an Interest in him. The next Words acquaint us with his Joy of Faith, how much he was pleas'd with his Portion, what Delight the Thoughts of it did afford him. *The Lines are fallen to me in pleasant Places, I have a goodly Heritage* Complain who will, and Change who will, I will not, I cannot have a better God; therefore I am resolved to cleave to him that I have.

Secondly, *Are they God-justifying Thoughts?* Self-judging, Self-condemning, Self-abhorring Thoughts. What am I, said *David*, and what is my Fathers House? Behold I am vile, said *Job*. Not worthy to be called thy Son, said the repenting and returned *Prodigal*. But still he thinks of God, and speaks well too, and honourably, and that under the severest Frowns, the bitterest Rebukes and smartest Blows. Though he be an angry God, an hiding God, a frowning God, yet still he is a good God. Though he correct me, though he multiply my Wounds, though I am almost consumed by the blow of his Hand, yet he doth all Things well. Though He seems to cast me off, I will wait upon him, though he lead me into a Wilderness, I will follow him thither; yea, though He kill me, I will trust in him. You may read this at length in those bitter-sweet Breathings of the Royal Prophet, *Psalm 22. 1, 2, 3. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, why art thou so far from helping me, and from*

from the Words of my Roaring? O my God, I cry in the Day-time, and thou hearest not, and in the Night-season, and am not silent. This was very sad, and greatly afflictive, and he could not forbear humbly telling God of it; but for all this he gives an honourable Report of him in the very next Words. *But thou art Holy, O thou that inhabitest the Praises of Israel.* That he laid down as an Eternal Truth; by no Person, and in no Case to be called in Question or Doubted of.

Thirdly, *Are they God-endearing Thoughts?* Such as speak the great Esteem you have of him, and high value you set upon him. What ever else you want, you can find that in him, which will supply it; and whatever other Good you have, you find that in him which doth infinitely excel it, *Psalms 73. 26. Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth which I desire beside thee.* Here thou art my Best, hereafter thou shalt be my All. On Earth my Desires shall be bounded by thee, in Heaven my Happiness shall be compleated in thee. If these, O poor, yet happy Christian, and such as these be those Thoughts of God which are the Matter of thy Choice, and Love, and Delight; thou maiest comfortably conclude, that thou hast been the Object of his gracious Thoughts. Such Thoughts of God in thee, are no other than the Work and Operation of his blessed Spirit, and the sweet Fruit and Effect of his Eternal Thoughts concerning thee.

III. Exhortation.

The Third Thing, O Saints, unto which I do exhort you, is this, *Let the Thoughts of God be precious to you.* The Text tells us, they were so to David, and why should they not be so to you,

you, and to me, yea, and to all that are born again, that tread in the steps of *Abrahams* Faith, that are *Israelites* indeed, the Children of the most High God. As for others, who are wholly Carnal, whose Souls are immerst and drown'd in Sense, they are no more capable of judging of these Things, than a blind Man is of Colours; the Fable tells us, that a Cock scraping in a Dunghill lighted upon a Jewel, but he preferr'd a poor Barley-Corn before it: And no wonder, because it was more suitable to him. Just so it is with carnal Men, and so it will be as long as they continue what they are; speak to them of the precious Thoughts of God, and they savour them not, because they understand them not, being quite above their reach, and out of their Element. Tell them of Corn and Wine, Gold and Silver, of a flourishing Trade, and some rich Purchases; and they will hear you without tiring, all this is Musick in their Ears. Therefore I do not for the present, and during this State, advise these to prize and highly Value the Thoughts of God, looking upon it as that which would be labour lost. My Counsel to them shall first be to look after the change of their Nature, the sanctifying of their Hearts; let them pray for the Grace of God, and beg it with utmost Earnestness. Let them make sure of that, and then they will taste a singular sweetness in the gracious Thoughts of God, and so make them the Matter of their rejoicing.

Look how it was with that miserable Demoniack, of whom an whole Legion of Devils had got the actual Possession; when once our Lord had by his mighty Power wrought Deliverance for him, and cast them out; so that He was come again

again to his right Mind, He was found not Living among the Tombs, nor playing his Mad Pranks to the Terrour and Hurt of others, but sitting at the Feet of Jesus; and when Christ was entred into a Ship in Order to his Departure from that Countrey, where the Inhabitants lov'd their Swine better than a Saviour; this poor Creature had no Mind to be left behind, but prayed that he might be with him. After this happy Change in his Condition, there was to him no Company in all the World so good and pleasant, so excellent and desirable, as the Company of Christ was. So here, when the Devil is once cast out, Sin dethron'd and brought under, and Grace planted in the Soul, then there is no Friend in all the World comparable to God; *Psalms 73. Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth that I desire beside thee.* And there is no Fellowship like Fellowship with God, *Psalms 84. 10. One Day in thy Courts is better than a Thousand.* And no Entertainment so delicious as the Thoughts of God, *Psalms 104. 34. My Meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord.* To you, O Saints—I do now direct this Exhortation, O let it be acceptable to you, and powerful upon you! Let these gracious Thoughts of God be exceeding precious in your Esteem, and make it appear that they are so; now in Case you do ask me, how, or in what Way you should make this appear. I shall Answer in these Particulars.

First, *Make your high Esteem of the Thoughts of God evident, by the delightful fixing and dwelling of your Minds upon them.* A grateful and pleasing Object greatly takes with a Person, and ties, as it were, and fastens him to it, so that he knows

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not how to part with it, how to get off from it. Thus it is with a wicked Man as to his Sin, *Job* 20. 12, 13. *Wickedness is sweet in his Mouth, and he hides it under his Tongue. He spares it and forsakes it not, but keeps it still within his Mouth.* Since it is sweet to him, he would be continually chewing upon it; he never is weary of Sin, he never hath so much of it, but that He would still have more. So the Lord *Jesus* is exceedingly pleased with the Church his Spouse, He seeth himself formed in her, and his Spirit dwelling in her, and his Comeliness in her, and that doth abundantly delight him; *Cant.* 4. 9. *Thou hast ravished my Heart, my Sister, my Spouse, thou hast ravished my Heart with one of thine Eyes, with one Chain of thy Neck.* And now observe what is said of him, *Cant.* 7. 5. *The King is held in the Galleries.* He scarce knew how to take his Eye off, He was so fixt that he could not stir; and in the next Words, *verse* 6. He laies down the Reason of it, *How fair, and how pleasant art thou, O Love for Delights.* He saw so much Sweetness, Beauty, and Loveliness in her that he never was, never could be weary of beholding her, much to the same Purpose it was with Holy *David* in reference to the Law of God; *Psalms* 119. 97. *O how Love I thy Law, it is my Meditation all the Day!* It was a great, a dear, and entire Love that this good Man had for the Law, the Word of God, the whole Word, and he was able to demonstrate and prove it; and that by this, because it was his Meditation. While others had vain and foolish Thoughts, worldly and sinful Thoughts, enough and to spare; his were directed to the most proper and profitable Object, that Divine Law which was to be the Card and

Compass that he ought to Steer his Course by: The Directory of his Life, the Rule of his Actions. Yea, saith he, *it is my Meditation all the Day*. He had not only a few transient and flitting Thoughts, but such as were permanent and abiding; he made it his Days Work, to Study it well, to acquaint himself thoroughly with it, and to live in Obedience to it. Thus here the true Love of God will command our Thoughts of him, and fix them upon him; Love and Meditation will mutually and mightily influence one another, Love will raise and fix the Meditation, and Meditation will Augment and Increase the Love.

Secondly, *Make your high Esteem and Valuation of the most gracious Thoughts of God, to appear by the repeating of your Thoughts of them*. Be you frequent in your studying them; as if a Man doth greatly Delight in his Friend, He will be with him as much as He can, there will be many a visit given: Alas! He knoweth not how to stay away. So when the Soul is indeed enamoured and taken with God, and the Things that be of God; it will renew its visits of him, and multiply its Meditations upon him. It will be, not only thinking of God every Day, but often in a Day; yea, the oftner the better. These Thoughts shall mingle with worldly Business, and so make it some part of Amends for mingling of vain and earthly Thoughts with Holy Duties: Yea, and these Thoughts shall not be excluded and shut out by Company, but whoever be within, if these Knock at the Door, they shall be receiv'd and welcom'd. These Thoughts shall be Sawce to his Meat, and make his richest Dainties relish the better; and these also are the Pleasure of his

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walk. I do not doubt, but *Isaac* in the Fields was full out as much delighted with his Meditation upon God, as He was with his meeting with *Rebekah*; and how fearless and chearful was *David* in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, so long as He could say, God was with him.

How precious are thy Thoughts unto me, O God! Saith the Prophet in the Text, and in the next Verse He adds, *When I awake, I am still with Thee.* He did not mean it, only as He was the Object of Gods Care, and found himself under the never slumbering Eye of a watchful God, and under the safe protecting Wing of an Omnipotent God; but he was still with God by spiritual and holy Meditation: So Mr. *Ainsworth* understands it, I awake and am still meditating upon thee. Lord, as thou deservest, so thou hast my *best* Thoughts, yea, and my *first* Thoughts. I do not make my God wait while I speak with some other Friend, or dispatch some other Business. As soon as the Band of Sleep is loosed, and my Senses are again at Liberty, my Mind immediately gets upon the Wing, and takes its flight for Heaven. As soon as my Eyes open, I direct them to God; and, saith he, it is not thus, only now and then; in some Fit, some Fright, or good Humour, but it is still so. This is the constant Bent of my Soul, my Soul prevents my heavy and lumpish Body, that gets up first; my Body doth not so soon rise out of its Bed, as my Mind and Affections mount up to Heaven. And doubtless, it was thus with him, not only in a Morning, but frequently, often in a Day. As we may learn from what he saith, in *Psalms* 25. 15. *Mine Eyes are ever toward the Lord*, i. e. at all Times, and in all Conditions.

When I am alone, and when in Company; in my serene Halcion Days, and in cloudy tempestuous ones too. Such an one is like to the Needle, after it hath been touched by the Loadstone, which is continually in a restless Motion, shaking and trembling, unless when it turns to the North-pole. So a truly gracious and holy Soul, which hath had a sanctifying touch from the Divine Spirit, is uneasie and tremulous till it turn to God; without some Enjoyment of him it knoweth not how comfortably to enjoy its self or any Thing else, without him other Things are empty and unsavoury. In the Time of the Deluge, the unclean *Raven* could with Pleasure and Satisfaction, light and rest, and feed upon the dead and putrid Carcasses, which lay floating upon the Waters; but the *Dove* could find no Place for the Sole of its Foot, until it returned back again to the *Ark*. So though the unregenerate, who is sunk into the Flesh, and grown carnal thoroughout, can pick up a Satisfaction, and by Consequence find for a while a rest for himself in these sublunary Inferiour Enjoyments; like that rich Worldling mention'd in the Scripture, who having his Barns fill'd, and from thence reckoning upon Goods enough for many Years, called upon his Soul to take its Ease as having nothing else to do, nothing better to make sure of, and was therefore justly called a Fool by the Spirit of God. Yet a Person that is born from above, and made Partaker of a Divine Nature, and hath a Principle of saving Grace and Love infused into him; can take up no where, but must be making haste home-ward, and upon his return unto his God. Methinks the Language of Holy *David* to this Purpose is very remarkable

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ble, in *Psalms* 116. 7. *Return unto thy rest, O my Soul! For the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* One would think he might have said, O my Soul! Since God hath been so gracious to thee, and dealt so liberally with thee, reaching out his Favours and Blessings with such a large Hand; thou needest not look out any further, but stay at home for Time to come. Be very thankful for what thou hast, and take the Comfort of it. But it was far otherwise with this good Man, what He had received from God, carried him still out to God; what He had was good and very sweet, but it was not enough, He would have more, yea, more and more, till he had all. Just as it was with the Spouse, *Cant.* 2. 3, 4. *I sat under his Shadow with great delight, and his Fruit was sweet to my Taste; He brought me into the Banqueting-house, and his Banner over me was Love.* But though this did afford her Delight, it did not damp her Desires, nor blunt her Appetite, but set a sharper Edge upon it, and inflam'd her Holy Thirst; *Verse* 5. *Stay me with Flagons, comfort me with Apples for I am sick of Love.* An Holy Soul doth not, it cannot find a plenary Rest in any thing it receives from God, but always seeks its rest in God. *Reddi ad illum apud quem summam invenies tranquillitatem, nempe ad Deum.* Return unto him, namely, to God, with whom alone thou canst find full, undisturbed and Everlasting Repose.

Thirdly, As you should shew the Esteem you have of the gracious Thoughts of God concerning his People by your dwelling much upon them, and by your frequent Repetition, so by the singular Delight which you take in them, and by pleasing your selves with God. For as there is that in God

which deserves your most ardent Desires, so is there that in him which may raise, maintain and feast your Delights. God is delighted in himself; yea, so great is that Satisfaction which he takes in himself, that he needs not look for any from without him; nor indeed is it possible that all the World, nay, that Ten Thousand Worlds, if there were so many, should make any the least Addition to his own Fulness, Happiness and Joy: All the sacred and glorious Persons in the Godhead do take the same Infinite Delight as in themselves, so in one another, the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father, both in the Spirit, and the Spirit again in them. Thus speaks the Eternal Son, *Prov. 8. 22, 23. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his Works of Old. I was set up from Everlasting, from the Beginning, or ever the Earth was.* Now pass on and read what he saith, in *Verse 30. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his Delight, rejoicing always before him.* There is a mutual Delight and Joy that they have, that hath been from Everlasting, and will continue to Everlasting without Ending or Abatement.

Now since God hath in him enough, abundantly enough to delight himself, he cannot but have enough to delight his People: If any do not desire God, it is because they do not know him; if any do not delight in God, it is because they have not in them a suitableness to him, which is the miserable Case of Devils, and of all wicked and ungodly Men: Otherwise for certain he cannot but be pleasant for Delights. There can be no want in him, in whom there is an Infinite Fulness, no want in him who is the bottomless, and boundless Ocean of Being and Goodness; that

that which can fill a Tun can fill a Pint, that which can fill the vast Sea can much more fill a Bottle. That which is an Income and Revenue sufficient to Answer the Expences, and Support the Grandure of a mighty Prince, cannot but be enough to maintain an ordinary private Person. That God who fills both Heaven and Earth by his Omnipresence, the former with his Glory, and the latter with his Goodness, cannot but have enough to fill the Heart of Man, and that when its Capacity is enlarged to the utmost.

There is indeed among all the Saints upon Earth not one to be found, that is satisfied with that which he hath of God while He is here; it is true, He doth not desire a better God, yet he desires to be more with God than yet he is, that his Communion with him might be more intimate; and that he might have more of God than yet he hath, and so his Enjoyment of him might be more full; but the Reason hereof, is not because there is any defect or emptiness in God, but because of their present State, which is a State of Absence from the Lord, and a State of Minority and Non-age, and because they are wanting to themselves; drawing no more from him, and living no more by Faith upon him than they do: His Fulness is infinitely great, but their Capacities are very little; and they frequently too too slack, and remiss in their Endeavours. When once they are brought into the Presence of God, and placed upon his Right-hand; and there have a fulness of Grace, and that Grace constantly in the heighth of its Activity, they will meet with a fulness of Joy and Pleasures for evermore.

Now then O Christians, manifest the Esteem you have of God, and his gracious Thoughts by

the Delight which you take in him, and them. I have often thought the poor Prophet in a very dark and dismal Condition, when He tells us, *Psalms 77. 2, 3. His Soul refused to be comforted, he remembered God and was troubled.* Without peradventure there was excessive bitterness in his Spirit, since it did imbitter to him the very remembrance of his God; yea, and that to such a Degree, as his Spirit was overwhelmed. Your Thoughts of God should promote your Faith in him, and your Love to him; they should raise an Holy Chearfulness, and even put you into a Transport. Hence you have such Commands, as these, *Psalms 37. 4. Delight thy self in the Lord.* *Phil. 4. 4. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, Rejoice.* When you have other Comforts besides God, do you rejoice in God more than in them. Let him be your exceeding Joy, *Psalms 43. 4.* Or as you have it in the Margin, *The gladness of your Rejoicing.* When you are stripped of your other Comforts, and have nothing but God left, then do you rejoice in him alone; at such a Time let not your Faith fail, nor your Hearts die within you, as if there were not a sufficiency in him for your Support: Remember the excellent Resolution of the Holy Prophet, upon the Supposition of a Case as bad as bad could be; *Hab. 3. 17, 18. Although the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines, the labour of the Olive-tree shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no Meat; the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will Joy in the God of my Salvation.*

Fourthly, Make this also to appear by your comforting your selves with the Thoughts hereof in all the Troubles and Distresses, which you either are or

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may be in. If you be the Children of God, you have your Afflictions. For the Apostle saith, *Heb. 12. If any be without Chastisement, they are Bastards, and not Sons.* You must have them, for you need them; the best of Saints do as much need Afflictions for their Souls, as they do Physick for their Bodies; they are good for you. *David* own'd it when he came to reflect upon them, *It is good for me, that I have been afflicted.* And you never have them, but when they are so; God is so loving and tender a Father, that he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men; he doth not whip his Children for whipping sake, but in order to Cure and Healing. *If need be, ye are in heaviness, because of divers Temptations,* then, and only then, not before there is need, not longer than there is need.

But whensoever Afflictions come, and of what kind soever they be, they are more or less Exercises of Patience; though they be necessary and wholesome, yet they are bitter: Though they yield the peaceable of Righteousness, yet they are pricking Thorns. None of them is for the present joyous but grievous, and Holy Persons themselves are too ready to complain of them. *Job* was a Mirrour of Patience, yet he said he would fill his Mouth with Arguments, and indeed he did fill it with Complaints; and as they are ready to complain of them, so sometimes to sink under them, and be weary. So *Job* said, *Now hath he made me weary,* and that both in Body and Spirit, quite tired. Now let the Everlasting Love of God to you, and his gracious Thoughts concerning you, quiet your Spirits, and bear you up under all; *Psalms 104. 34. My Meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the*

the Lord. Meditations upon God as he is a God in Christ, and our God in Covenant; and Meditations upon the Purposes and Promises of God concerning his People, and to them are *sweet* Meditations, and they should be *sweetning* Meditations. There is enough in them to sweeten a great deal of Wormwood and Gall, yea, a Cup of trembling when it is put into the Hand of a Believer; 2 Sam. 23. 5. *Though my House be not so with God, i. e. not so, as He had spoken in the foregoing Verse, viz. as a Morning without Clouds, nor as the tender Grass springing out of the Earth, by clear shining after Rain.* But there are many Sins committed in it, which do threaten it, many dark Clouds upon it which do obscure and benight it, and many violent Storms which have threatned and shaken it; *Yet He hath made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered, in all things and sure.* He hath in his own Breast purposed and resolved well concerning me, and by his Covenant He hath made Things sure to me; so that in all Vicissitudes and Changes, in all turns and overturnings, I can sit down in Peace and enjoy my self: *For this is all my Salvation, and all my Desire.* Thus he sate down and blest himself, however it be with my House, it will be well with me; I shall be secured, for here is all my Salvation, and I shall be richly supplied and provided for; here is all my Desire.

Fifthly, Make the high Esteem you have of the Thoughts of God, to appear by *your valuing of your selves by them*; and thinking the better or worse of your selves and your Condition, according to those Thoughts which the great and holy God hath of you, and for you. I very well know, that Persons of carnal Minds proceed altogether

together by other Measures, they rate themselves and others by what they have of this Worlds Goods: They look upon them as the only great and honourable Men, who are advanced to high Place and stand upon the Worlds upper Ground. Reckon them as the Rich Men who have bulky and over-grown Estates in Lands, or Moneys, or both; Waters of a full Cup wrung out to them, even as much or more than Heart can wish; and admire those as the only fine Persons, who have upon them fine Feathers, and are cloathed in gorgeous Apparel.

But now do you Rate Men, according as you judge them to be in God's Book; do you make Interest in God, and Esteem with him the Measure of your Judgment. We have an Account given us of several Practices of the wicked Man, and among the rest this is one; *Psalms 10. 3. He bleisseth the Covetous whom the Lord abhors.* He walks *Antipodes*, quite cross and contrary to God. Thus it is as to Things, what God forbids he doth, what God commands he omits and leaves undone. Thus it also is as to Persons, God abhorreth a covetous Person, and tells us, their End shall be Destruction, who mind earthly Things, and set their Hearts upon them; but these now bless them, and approve their doings. Now do you shew, that you have learned better, and that the holy and infinitely wise God, and you are of a Mind; do you set down this as a certain Truth, and chuse accordingly for yourselves; viz. that he is the Rich Man, and of all others best to pass, who hath the Lord for the Portion of his Inheritance; he is in the safest Condition who is one of Heaven Favourites, and hath a Room in the Heart and Love of God.

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He is the good Man indeed who is approved of God, in whom *the Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter, whose Praise is not of Men but of God*; Rom. 2. 29. And He is the blessed Man whom God hath set apart for himself, and intends Good to, special Mercy and Kindness to; *Cant. 1. 4. We remember thy Love more than Wine.* That is better than Wine, better than Life, better than the best of Creatures, better than all of them put together. Such an one, I mean, an holy Soul, one taught of God, knoweth how to Value these Inferiour Comforts, and to set a due estimate upon them, and he is and desires to be very thankful to God for them, and is conscienciously careful to use them as he ought, and to imploy and improve them for the Honour of that God who gave them to him, but still He doth not Value himself by them. These are Talents with which I am to Trade, and to give an Account of, but they are not my Portion; God doth not bestow them upon me as such, and I would not accept of them as such; for though they are good helps, yet they would make but a pitiful Portion: There is something that flowes from these Things in order to our present Subsistence and Comfort, but our Happiness is not laid up in them. *It is not Money, that makes the Man.* Neither the good Man, nor the blessed Man; but Interest in God, or Union to Christ, and the indwelling of the Spirit, and the Implantation of Grace. It is not therefore what this or that Man thinks of me, no, nor what all the Men in the World think of me; but what the great God thinks of me, who searches the Heart and possesseth the Reins, and knows what is in Man. What tho'

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Samuel looking upon Eliab, said, Surely the Lords anointed is before me. When God himself said, I have refused him, 1 Sam. 16. 6, 7. If I be approved of God, if I have a Room in the Heart of God, that is abundantly enough for me; though by Men I am counted no other than the Refuse and Off-scouring of the World; 1 Cor. 4. 3, 4. With me, it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of Mans Judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by my self, yet am I not hereby justified: But he that judgeth me is the Lord.

Lastly, *Make the high Esteem you have of the Thoughts of God to appear by your frequent, and most affectionate Discourses of him and them. Lay hold upon, and be glad of all Opportunities to such a Purpose; how can it be rationally concluded, that God himself, or his Thoughts, his gracious Thoughts and Purposes are precious to and much valued by them; who are continually taken up with Thoughts of, and talk about Vanities of the World, but never or very rarely speak of God. How many, with Grief, let it be spoken, how many are there, whose Tongues are every Day running over with Froth or Scum, loose, idle, insignificant, unprofitable, unedifying Tales; or else filthy absurd Communication, with which gracious Hearts are saddened, modest Ears are offended, and good Manners are corrupted. But these Persons have not God in all their Thoughts, and so can and do pass Day after Day, and Week after Week without any serious and holy Discourses of him.*

And what is the Reason of this, but either their *Atheism*, not believing there is such a Supreme Eternal Being, or because they do lightly
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Esteem him. Other Things are dearer to them than God, and much more set by ; did Men but Taste the incomparable sweetness that is in God, had they but a savoury Relish and experimental Acquaintance, with the Excellency that is in Jesus Christ, they for certain would be more frequent in their Converses with him, more earnest in their Longings after him, and more delighted in their Discourses of him. Thus it was with the enamoured Spouse, she had sate under the Shadow of her Beloved with great Delight, and found his Fruit sweet to her Taste ; He had led her into his Banqueting-house, and there spread over her the Banner of his Love : And this did not only make her Sick of Love, and set her a longing for closer Communion and fuller Enjoyment, but likewise set her upon speaking of him, and commending him to the Daughters of *Jerusalem* in order to the gaining of their Hearts over to him, as well knowing their Interest in him, would be no prejudice nor loss to her self ; as no single Persons hath less of the Suns Light and Warmth, because so many Thousands are Fellow-sharers with him in them.

Affection, where it is real and vigorous, can no more be concealed and kept hid than Fire, which will find a vent and make its way. *It constrains us*, saith *Paul*, 2 Cor. 5. 14. Whensoever it is in the Heart commanding, it will sit upon the Lips ; if the Heart be indeed taken with God, and boiling or bubling up appretiating Thoughts of him, the Tongue will be as the Pen of a ready Writer, speaking of the Things which it hath made touching the King ; viz. our blessed Lord Jesus, the King of *Sion* and of Saints, the Lord of Glory, *Psalms* 45. 1. Well then, Christians,

Christians, let this be your daily Work, be much in Holy Discourses of God; *Psalm 29. 9. In his Temple doth every own speak of his Glory.* This is proper Temple-work, Church-work, belonging to and becoming of them that are Members of Churches; and it will tend to the Advantage both of them that speak, and of them that hear; fall to the Work then, and keep at it: Be often, be much in discoursing of God, his Eternal Excellencies, his inexhaustible Fulness, his gracious Purposes, his Everlasting Covenant, his exceeding great and precious Promises; his constant Care of the Church, and wise Government of the World: Tell of these Things to one another, to your Children and Servants, to your Friends and Neighbours; yea, and to all your Acquaintance, as the Spouse did the Praises of her beloved to the Daughters of *Jerusalem.*

IV. *Exhortation.*

In the Last Place, let me desire and exhort you to *maintain and keep up high, honourable, and becoming Thoughts of God.* And so let your returns to God be in some measure answerable to the Obligations which have been, and are by him laid upon you. Since he hath precious Thoughts of you, see to it that you have amicable Thoughts of him; such as do present him to you in his greatest Beauty and Loveliness, and will render him the most deserving Object of your dearest Love and highest Delight. The Thoughts are those which He hath his Eye very much upon, and which he would have the chief Possession of, and the uppermost Seat in. It is his Prerogative Royal to discern and know them, it is his undoubted Right to be chief in them, and he will at the last and great Day judge them, and Re-ward

ward or Punish Men according as they have been. Earthly Princes lay claim to, and have a Power of ruling the Tongues of Men; and binding their Hands, and regulating their Actions, and Mis-carriages in any of these coming under their Cognizance they can in a judicial Way; animadvert upon according to the Demerit of the Thing. But God only who is the great *αὐτοκράτωρ*, searcher and knower of the Heart of Man, sits judge upon the Thoughts. His declared Will and Pleasure is, that we do all sanctifie him in our Hearts, *Isa. 8. 13. Sanctifie the Lord of Hosts himself*, i. e. by having right Notions and Apprehensions of him, God-endearing, God-magnifying Thoughts, such as are worthy of so great and excellent a Being, such as do reflect an Honour and Glory upon him.

I too well know, that there are sometimes; yea, too often in gracious and Heaven-born Souls, black and vile Thoughts of God; blasphemous Thoughts, despairing Thoughts, some that strike at his very Being. Some at his Holiness, some at his Righteousness, some at his Mercy, and Goodness, and Truth. These the black cursed Fiend of Hell works in their Minds, and promotes to his utmost, for He is an implacable Enemy both to God and his People; indeed to all the Children of Men, to whom he envieth a Possibility of Salvation, and whose Welfare and Happiness he with might and main Endeavours to obstruct and prevent, and being in the greatest Rage, and altogether Desperate, because He knowes his Case is so, and that there is no way for him to escape out of the Misery and Torments unto which he is condemned by a righteous and revenging Judge; he Cares not what He doth to

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Gods Dishonour, and to Mens Prejudice and Undoing: And accordingly he will be sowing these Tares, and casting such Thoughts as these into their Minds, yea, and fixing them there, and multiplying them too as much as ever he can. But now such Souls as these that are reconciled to God, and made Partakers of a Divine Nature, are affrighted at such Thoughts as at so many fiery Darts, and quite weary of them, and of themselves; yea, and of their Lives too, because of them. And so long it is well, let them not be discouraged, nor cast away that good Hope which through Grace they may have in God. So long as these wretched Thoughts are not lov'd but hated, not lik'd but loath'd, not welcom'd, but resisted: So long as you groan under them, as an heavy Burden, too heavy for you to bear, and bid Defiance to them, and make all the Resistance you can, and by earnest, fervent Prayer call in help from him whose Grace is sufficient for you, and whose Power is manifested and perfected in his Peoples weakness; In a Word, so long as you would gladly be deliver'd from them, you may Comfort yourselves with this; that though you are very uneasy, yet your Condition is safe, these Thoughts are your Affliction, but they are not your Sin. The great and righteous God, who perfectly knows how the Matter stands, will not charge them upon you, but upon Satan who is indeed the Father of them, his Brats they are, and he hath, like himself, laid them at your Door, that you might Nurse them. But now, since there are such vile Thoughts forcibly introduced into your Minds by your Enemy, do you carefully look to it, that those Thoughts which you have

Reason to call your own, those which are your natural genuine Off-spring, those which you Study for, and hug, and cherish, be of such a Constitution and Temper, as that God who understands them afar off may approve of them: And here for the shutting up of this Discourse, I shall Instance in several Thoughts, which you will do well to dwell upon, and make the Companions of your Choice.

First, *Think of God as a Lord fit to be obeyed, a Master fit be served.* And so do you take up his Yoke, and Kiss him with a Kiss of Love and Homage. Thus the Church did, *Isa. 26. 13. O Lord our God, other Lords besides thee have had Dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy Name.* Other Lords have had Dominion over us, by them they meant the *Babylonians* and other Tyrannical Princes, by whom they had been barbarously handled and cruelly oppressed; but we will make mention of thy Name, and thine only as our rightful Sovereign and gracious Benefactor. Now do you think and speak the same as to those far worse Lords, the Lusts of your own Hearts; these have usurped a Power, seated themselves in the Throne, have had Dominion over me; but now I am quite weary of them, I count their Service slavery, and would have their Yoke broken from off my Neck. Now let me be made one of thy Servants, in whose Service there is perfect Freedom: Let me be brought now into the gracious Liberty of thy Children, that I may at Last be a Fellow-sharer in their glorious Liberty; and from henceforth, I will make mention of thy Name, yea, of thine only, as him whom I would most willingly obey, and be, throughout my whole Course rul'd and govern'd

govern'd by. Look upon his Law, as being concerning all Things right, holy, and just, and good, none of his Commandments grievous; but his Yoke easie and his Burden light. Look upon the Work he hath cut out for you as the best Work in the World, being most profitable, for the Work is the Wages, and to do the Will of God is Meat and Drink; in the keeping of the Commandments there is great Reward, and if so, what will there be after they have been kept? From First to Last God is gracious. He sets you your Work, and will assist you in the doing of it; *Rom. 8. 26. The Spirit helps our Infirmities. We know not what to pray for as we ought, God pours out a Spirit of Grace and Supplication, and he makes Intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.* That God that orders out the Commandment, will impart Strength for the obeying of it. *The very Way of the Lord is Strength to the Upright.* And what will follow? *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath entered into the Heart of Man, what God hath prepared for them that Fear and Love him.* When the Work is finished there will be a perfect, undisturbed and Eternal Rest. When the War is over, Enemies and Difficulties overcome, and Victory obtained, there will be a glorious and never ending Triumph: After trading with Talents, and having been faithful in a little, there will be an Entrance into the Joy of their Lord. In a Word, after they have dispatched the Work of a Servant, they shall receive the Inheritance of a Son. Grant that there be Difficulties in the Work, yet they are not insuperable; but have been overcome, and may be again, yea, and for certain shall by all them whose Hearts are upright with

God, but together with those Difficulties there shall be proportionable Strength for the conquering them, and surpassing Delights for the sweetening them. Though the way that leads to Life be Up-hill, yet it is pleasantness and Peace: Such Thoughts as these rising up from gracious Promises, and repeated Experiences, are the Reason why they that dwell in Gods House, are and still will be praising him.

Secondly, *Think of God as the most proper and adequate Object of your Trust.* You cannot trust him too far, nor with too much, his Ability and Fidelity do deserve, and may encourage his Peoples highest Confidence in him; his Word you may safely take, for it is sufficient Security, better than Mans Bond, hath he said it, and shall he not do it? And upon his Promises you may rely, for they are all *Yea and Amen*, of most sure and certain Accomplishment; how unlikely was *Abrahams* having a Son by *Sarah*, when so far stricken in Years, yet it was so. How punctual was he in bringing his People out of *Egypt* at the sett Time, *Exod* 12. 41. *It came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty Years, even the self same Day it came to pass, that all the Hosts of the Lord went out of the Land of Egypt:* And how exact was He in making his Word good, in all those Things which he had given it for, to that his Ancient People, *Josh*. 23. 14. *Ye know in all your Hearts, and in all your Souls, that not one Thing hath failed of all the good Things which the Lord your God spake concerning you, all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.*

Therefore do you trust him, for he is the same God, as great as ever, without any variableness, or shadow of turning; trust him with your pre-

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cious Souls, and with your frail, infirm Bodies, and your uncertain Estates, trust him with your selves and with your Children; trust him with the Nation and with the Church, trust him for the Performance of all Scripture Prophecies and Promises; *Jerusalems* being made a Praise, *Babylon* an hissing, and all the Kingdoms of the Earth the Lords and his Christs, *Hab* 2. 3. *The Vision is for an appointed Time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie, though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.* Trust him in halcion, serene Days, and in cloudy tempestuous ones too, in Prosperity, and in Adversity too. When God strows your Way with Roses, yea, and when he hedgeth it about with Thorns, *Psalms* 9. 10. *They that know thy Name, will put their trust in thee.* The better God is known, the more he will be trusted, *For He hath not forsaken them that seek him.* Not any of them, not one of them, ask the whole Generation of them that seek him, and they will give an honourable Report of him, that at one Time or other, sooner or later, He was found of them and gracious to them, as good as their Hopes, yea, and better too.

Really it is a strange Thing to consider, how prone and ready Men are to trust in the Creatures, though they be forbidden; and though there be a Curse denounced against them that do it, *Jer.* 17. 5. *Thus saith the Lord, cursed is the Man that trusteth in Man, and maketh Flesh his Arm, and whose Heart departeth from the Lord.* And though they did always deceive and fail them that trusted in them, Riches are deceitful and uncertain, take to themselves Wings and flee away; Men of low Degree are Vanity, and Men

of high Degree are a Lie; both one and the other have their Breath in their Nostrils, and therefore wherein are they to be accounted of? They are but bruised Reeds, which cannot support him that leans upon them, but will pierce him thorough with many Sorrows: The World cheats them that trust in it, and Sin ruines them; yet the generality of Persons will trust them notwithstanding, yea, and that with more than they are worth, with more than all the World is worth, even their precious and immortal Souls. I do beseech you to have a Care of it, you cannot trust God too much, nor Creatures too little; *Solomon* speaking of Things below, saith all is Vanity; yea, Vanity of Vanities, most vain Vanity! And *he that trusteth in Vanity shall find, that Vanity will be his recompence.* And because Vanity, therefore Vexation of Spirit too.

Cast you your Anchor where it may take good and sure Hold, and not return to you again; make choice of God, and fix upon him as the best, most proper, yea, only Object of your Confidence. Look upon him as able to perform all that he hath spoken, whose Power knows no such Thing as an impossibility; no, not a Difficulty, whose Word hath in it a creating Power, so that he doth what he will both in the Armies of Heaven, and in the Kingdoms of Men, even to the fulfilling of all his Pleasure. Look upon God as one that is true to his Word, and faithful to his Promise, always in one Mind and changeth not; and faithful likewise to the true Interest of his People, ever mindful of his Covenant and of them, having graven them upon the Palms of his Hands, and set them as a Seal upon his Heart. Look upon him as a Rock, the
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Rock of Ages and of Eternity, upon which you may most safely build all your Hopes, and lay all your weight; never give way to Suspicions of God, nor to jealous Thoughts: But let Times and Things go how they will, do you commit your Souls to him, and leave all with him, and so through Faith possess your Souls in Patience.

Thirdly, *Look upon God as the most exact and excellent Pattern.* And accordingly set him always before you, as one that is most worthy to be eied and studied, and followed; this was the constant Practice of Holy *David*, who could say, *His Eyes were ever toward the Lord.* There are a great many in the World that Love to follow others, but they make a very bad Choice, and so lose their way, and at last themselves. Thus there are some that follow the Imaginations of their own Hearts, though it be now with them as it was with those of the old World; *Gen. 6. 5. Every Imagination of the Thoughts of whose Heart was only Evil continually.* Others will follow the Fashion and Course of the World, though while they do so they walk after the Devil, the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that worketh in the Children of Disobedience, *Eph. 2. 2.* Others will follow the Will and Order of their Superiours be it what it Will. Thus it is charged upon *Ephraim*, as a very grievous and God-provoking Sin, *Hos 5. 11. That he willingly followed the Commandment. Jeroboam* and his Counsel set up Calves at *Dan* and *Bethel*, and required the People to go and Worship God before them, which was a false way of Worship, and they ought to have refused it, as the Three Children did bowing before the Golden Image which *Nebuchadnezzar* had set up, but *Ephraim* was of a

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complying Spirit, and willingly followed the Commandment, and God severely punished him for it, He was oppressed and broken in Judgment. And there are some that will follow a Multitude to do Evil. Though it is not the number of Transgressors that will justify a bad Action, or give an Impunity to the Offenders, or abate the smart of the Punishment. It is far better to follow them that are good, *Philip. 3. 17. Brethren, be Followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an Ensample.* And he gives them a very good Reason, why they should do so, in *verse 20 For our Conversation is in Heaven;* but since the best Men are imperfect, and have their Failings and Miscarriages, we must be Cautious in our following of them, *1 Cor. 11. 1. Be ye Followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

But now do you look upon God, as being above all others worthy to be eied and imitated by you; *And be ye Followers of him as dear Children.* Study well your Fathers Nature, and do you Endeavour to resemble and express it, being your selves made Partakers of a Divine Nature. Study your Fathers Life, and be you not alienated from it; do not you Live without God in the World, not contrary to him. Study your Fathers Will, and let your Will be swallowed up by it, and your Conversation regulated by it; and so for our blessed and glorious Lord who left us an Example, that we should tread in his Steps; let me say to you as *Paul* doth, *Phil. 2. 5. Let the same Mind be in you, which was also in Jesus Christ.* I know you would be like him at last in his Glory, therefore, now be as like him as you can in his Spirit, and Grace, and Holiness; and
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grow every Day while you live here liker and liker in his Humility, Obedience, and Activity, and in all his imitable Excellencies and Perfections; shew forth his Vertues, and shine with his Beams, and be in the World even as He was in the Lord: And be sure to dislike, to fall out with your selves, to loath and abhor your selves so far forth, as you discover in your selves any Thing that is contrary to God and Christ; and do what you can to get what is amiss mended, and what is wanting supplied, till you come to be completely conformed to your God and Saviour.

Fourthly, *Think of God, and look upon him as only worthy to be your highest and ultimate End.* As one whose Interest and Honour should signifie most with you, and weigh down all those Things which would vie and stand in Competition with it: Reckon whatsoever is below God, as by much too low, to be highest in your Valuation and Design. There are too too many in the World, who are altogether confin'd to themselves, narrowed and shrunke up into themselves; they are wholly for Self-will, and Self-pleasing, and Self-Interest, and Self-ends, which is flat and vile Idolatry; in doing of this they make themselves their Gods. And by thus seeking themselves they lose themselves, and by going about in this way to make themselves, they do most Effectually and to all Eternity ruine and undo themselves.

But let a better Spirit Act and appear in you, you cannot be ignorant how the Command runs, *1 Cor. 10. 31. Whether ye eat or Drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* Let that come in for its share in every Design you drive, and in every Business you undertake. Let all the Deliberate Actions of your Lives be directed

ed to, and meet in that as so many Lines in the Centre; and let all Things else that your Hand findeth to do, vail, stoop, and give Place to that as the Principal; as that which single and alone, is of inconceivably greater worth and Value than all other Things put together: Always remember, and often and often seriously think upon that which Holy *Paul* could in Truth say concerning himself, *Phil. 1. 21. To me to live is Christ.* To Honour his Name, and to promote the Interest of Christ, was the *Work of his Life.* And that he knew it to be so, and was able to Assert it, was the *Comfort of his Life.* And this was no more than what Christ might justly Challenge, and what *Paul* did owe unto him; for since Christ was by his Blood the Purchaser of Life for him, and by his Spirit the blessed and never failing Principle of Life in him. He is obliged to make the promoting of Christs Interest, and the Advancement of his Honour the great and principal Business of his Life.

Now do you go and do the same, and by this Means there will be a most happy Concord and Agreement between him and you; in this God and you will be one, and this will lead to an Oneness and Harmony in other Things; He makes himself, and his Glory his own End. He made all Things for himself, and he doth all Things for himself; and by this Means you may Promise your selves Success, and being Masters of your End, He will fulfil all his Pleasure, and in fulfilling his own Pleasure, he will fulfil yours. And this shall most certainly Issue in your Advantage, he will not be behind Hand with you; but Prosper the Work of your Hands, and give you the Desire of your Hearts. If you do heartily direct

rect all the Actions of your Lives to his Glory, as your principal and ultimate End, you may comfortably assure your selves, He will make use of your Salvation and Everlasting Happiness, as a Means to that End; *i. e.* He will glorifie himself, and get himself a Name, by pardoning your Sins, by accepting your Persons and saving your Souls.

Fifthly, *Look upon God as the great, wise and most excellent Governour, fit to be submitted to in all Things, and trusted with the Supream Management of Affairs.* He is the Lord of all, Times and Things, and Persons; and it is both his unquestionable Right, and in his Power to rule, to order and dispose the World, and all that is therein according to the good Pleasure of his Will. He lifteth up one, and casteth down another; he enlargeth and then straitens again, fills and empties, sends Peace, and then the Alarm of War, with Garments stained and roled in Blood; shakes Nations in Pieces, and causeth Desolations up and down the Earth, without asking leave of Men, or giving unto them any Account of his Matters.

And in like manner, He dealeth with particular Persons. He casts their Lines, and carves their Allowances as He himself thinks fit; makes *Job* the greatest Man in the *East*, and then brings him to a Dunghil, and makes him Poor even to a Proverb. He measures out our Health and Sickness, our Ease and Pain, our Comforts and Crosses, according to the Counsel of his own Will; neither may any say to him, What dost thou? Why hast thou made me so? Or why dost thou use me thus?

The Divine Providences are indeed many Times very Dark and Mysterious, there are Depths in them that we cannot possibly Fathom; they are Riddles which the wisest, most Inquiitive, and Understanding Person know not what to make of; but are at a loss about them till God is pleased to be his own Interpreter: His Way is always in the Sanctuary, Righteous and Holy, whatever He doth, he doth it well and like himself, so that He hath no Reason to Repent of it, nor have Men any to blame for it, yet not seldom his Way is in the Sea, so that his Foot-steps are not known.

Yea, and sometimes his Providences are very bitter to his own Children, seeming to run quite Cross to their Interest, and to his own Covenant and repeated Promises, into their Hands he puts a Cup of Trembling. What grievous Groans did poor *Job* pour out, yet faith, his Groaning was not heavier than his Stroke: And how severe did He seem to be unto good *Asaph* whom he plagued all the Day long, and chastened every Morning. How sore do you think must that poor Man needs be, since the Rod was never off his Back.

But now when it is so, with any of us in particular, or with the Church of God, though we or it are the Persons that see Afflictions by the Rod of his Wrath; and though we should see, as for any Thing I know, see we may greater Afflictions than we have hitherto seen: Let us not give way to any hard Thoughts of him: Complain to him we may, there is leave given us, and so shall Assistance be too, but let us never complain of him. No, no, but still own his Righteousness in his sharpest Dispensations, yea, and his Faithfulness too: And be most free and ready to acknowledge

knowledge it your Duty, instead of Quarrelling; to submit to kiss the Rod, and accept the Punishment of your Iniquity. When he covers his Face with the greatest Frown, and appears most Angry; it is not for us to be Angry too, but humble and silent, as *David* was, when almost consumed by the blow of Gods Hand, *He was Dumb, and opened not his Mouth*, considering who it was that had done it. It highly becomes us to take up the Cross when he laies it in our Way, and to carry it patiently, till he shall please to take it off.

Think of him as a *God* of Infinite Wisdom, who understands himself and all Things else, and is not liable to the least Errour or Mistake, but knoweth what is most proper for him to do, what will most Conduce to the Glory of his own Name, most to the enlarging of his own Interest, most to the Comfort and Benefit of his Church and People; and most to the Disappointment, Confusion, and fatal over-throw of his and their Enemies, and when is the fittest Season for him to awaken his Arm to these great and glorious Purposes; and think of him not only as a God but also as a *Father*, a Father of Mercies, and God of Compassions, whose Love to his People is equal to his Wisdom; and by Consequence, as he can do them no wrong, so he will do them no hurt, yea, and do not only maintain and keep up in your Minds, such becoming Notions, but also speak well of his Name, and give an honourable Report of him, as Holy *Asaph* did after he had weather'd the Point, and born up against the Fury of a Temptation that had assaulted him, and overcame it, he brake out into this deserved Commendation of God; *Psalms* 73. 1.

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Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean Heart. Such Thoughts as these do directly tend to the Glory of God, and greatly make for it; and they do contribute no less to the Peace and Comfort of a Christian, making the remembrance of him more pleasant to you, and every Condition in which you are, most Easie. From hence it was, that upon the loss of all he had which was comfortable and valuable, *Job* could still possess his Soul in Patience, saying at that Time, *Job* 1. 2. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.*

Sixthly, *Look upon God alone as enough for you, enough to Supply you, to Delight you, and to make you Happy.* Think him a Good so great, so full, so every way Perfect, that the greatest Man upon Earth; yea, the highest Angel in Heaven may very well be satisfied with; take Notice of the Royal Prophet, in *Psalms* 4. When others liv'd at Uncertainty, not knowing well whether to direct their Motions, his Eyes were ever toward the Lord, like a Needle touched by a Loadstone that is ever turned to the North-pole, when he saw a Multitude of others running up and down, like a Company of starving and distracted Creatures, searching and enquiring after something that would silence the clamorous Appetites of their empty and craving Souls, *Who will shew us any Good?* He like a Man that had been well instructed concerning the excellency and inexhaustible Fulness of God, and was no stranger to his own Interest in him, sat still where He was, and thought he needed do no more than lift up an hearty Prayer for a greater Display, and clearer Manifestations of the Divine Love. *Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy*
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Countenance upon us. Which was no sooner done, but he immediately brake out into a lofty strain of Triumph. *Thou hast put gladness in my Heart, more than in the Time that their Corn and Wine increased.* To this he look'd, and here he took up his rest as one that had no need to look any further; and if we consult, *Psalms 16. 5. and ver. 6.* we shall find him blessing himself in his God. *The Lord is the Portion of mine Inheritance, and of my Cup, thou maintainest my Lot, the Lines are fallen unto me in pleasant Places, I have a goodly Heritage.*

Now, Christians, do you write after this excellent Copy, and be expressive of the same Spirit; make sure that God is your God, and then rejoice in him: What though others have the Star-light of the Creatures, look upon thy self as not wanting them, so long as thou hast the comfortable Beams, and vital Influence of the Eternal Sun; so long as thou hast the Fountain of living Waters to quench thy Thirst, the Well of Salvation to let down your Bucket into, the immense, bottomless, and boundless Ocean of Divine Goodness to please and solace your selves, Conclude you shall do well enough without this, or that, or the other Drop. So long as thou hast a God for thine own, and knowest that thou hast so, know thou maist live without a Creature; and when this Relation dies, and that Friend forsakes, and *they are increas'd that trouble thee, and multitudes rise up against thee, then do thou encourage thy self in the Lord thy God.*

In short, What tho' thou art poor in the World, rejoice in the assurance of thy being rich in faith; tho' thou art not possessed of one foot of land, yet thou art a great Heir, even of no less

less than a Kingdom; and tho' thou hast not here an *House* of thine own to put thine *Head* in, yet thou mayst lay it in the Bosom of a God; and when thou art, as to outward appearance, as *having nothing*, yet then be glad at heart, as becomes one that hath him who alone is *ALL*, and infinitely more than all other things could amount to, were they ten thousand times more and better than they are. Sing in a Prison as *Paul* and *Silas* did; be quiet and content upon a Dunghil, as *Job* was; embrace and welcome, and hugg a Stake, as some of the Martyrs have done, as knowing thou hast such a God as neither *things present*, nor *things to come* can separate thee from; such a God as Eternity it self will neither exhaust nor make thee weary of.

Seventhly, *Think of God as of one that is the best, the most desirable, and most delightful Companion in all the World.* So the Holy Prophet Thought when He brake out into that Expressi-
on, *Psalms 73. Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth that I desire beside thee.* Earth can afford none so good, Heaven it self not a better. If you would know my present desires, they all run out to God; if my future Happiness, it lies in God, He is the total Summ of it. Let the same be in you, for it is truly Christian, what becomes one that is Heaven-born; and let it shew it self in these following Particulars, which I shall briefly touch upon, and so shut up this Discourse.

First, *Make this to appear by your keeping up a Communion with God, while you are here.* This hath been the Spirit, this the Practice of good Men in both Worlds. In the Old World, *Enoch walked with God, Gen. 5. 24.* And so did *Noah*

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at the fag end of it, when all Flesh had corrupted their Way, still the Account given was this; *Gen. 6. 9. Noab was a just Man, and perfect in his Generation*; in the several Ages that he liv'd and pass'd through, He was the same Man, and *He walked with God*; and so it hath been since, witness the Account given by the Apostle of himself, and other Saints in his Days, *1 John 1. Truly our Fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

Secondly, *Pray earnestly, and do what you can toward it, that this your Communion with God may be constant, and close, and intimate as it is possible to be while you are here, in the midst of so many Corruptions that are within you, and so many Avocations that are without, and the great Disturbances that you will be sure to have given you both from the one and from the other.* Keep your Minds as much fixt upon him, and your Thoughts as intent upon him as is possible: Remember *David*, who could say, *He set the Lord always before him, and his Eyes were ever toward the Lord.* Oh how sweet is it, when a Soul can say, *My Heart is fixed, O God! my Heart is fixed.* Do not suffer any strangeness to grow between God and you; there will indeed be none, unless through your own Default; for He will be with his People so long as they be with him, there are on his Part, no angry withdrawals from them, unless there be first on their Part some sinful withdrawals from him.

Thirdly, *Do not rest in any Thing without God.* Not in Creatures, not in Duties, not in Ordinances. First, *Not in Creatures.* Not in the best of them, nor in the greatest number of them. Remember what *Moses* said, *Exod. 33. 15. If thy*
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Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. Consider the Place where then he was, a waste and howling Wilderneck, the Place whether they were Travelling, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, but he rather chose to be in a Wilderneck with God, than in a *Canaan* without him: Be you of the same Mind. Take not up with the fullest Condition without God, for then that fulness will be Emptiness. All these Things are no other than so many Cyphers, if God do not stand before them as the Figure to put a Significancy and Value into them. Secondly, *Rest not in Duties without God.* There is a Duty you owe to God and Man, to your Souls and Bodies, to your Selves and Others, to Relations and Neighbours, and Strangers, Friends and Enemies, and it is good to be found in them all; but you may abound in these Things, and after that be never the nearer, neither as to Acceptance, nor as to Advantage, unless you be with God in them. Prayer is a most precious, choice, and sweet Duty; a Life of Prayer, is next to a Life of Praise, which is the Life of Heaven, but what is Prayer without the Souls following hard after God. He complained of them, who drew nigh unto him with their Lips, whilest their Hearts were far from him. Thirdly, *Rest not in Ordinances without the God of Ordinances.* Not in Fellowship with Saints, unless you have Fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the gracious Assistance of the Spirit. What are all the Members, in Case they be separated from their glorious Head. What is the golden Candlestick, unless the Son of Man walk in it. Not in the Word, unless it be accompanied with a Divine Power, and come in the Demonstration

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tion of the Spirit. To what Purpose is it to hear the Voice of the Sons of Men, without likewise hearing the Voice of the Son of God; truly to no more than it was for *Gebazi* to lay his Masters Staff upon the Face of the *Shunamites* Dead Son, who continued fast bound in the Chains of Death, till *Elisha* his Master came and stretched himself upon the Child, whereupon its Flesh waxed warm; or to no more than it was for the diseased, impotent People to repair to the Pool of *Bethesda*, save when the Angel descended and troubled the Waters. *Rest not in the Sacrament* alone, for what will the external Seal avail, without the Seal of the Spirit; and how shall your spiritual Strength be increased, and your Souls nourished up to Everlasting Life by feeding upon the Bread of the Lord, unless you do by Faith feed upon the Lord the Bread. You may sit at the Lords Table till you are weary, and go away from it as bad as you were when you came; yea, and worse too, unless the King of Glory is pleased to sit at his Table, and give you of his Love, and to taste that he is indeed gracious.

Fourthly, *Let not any Communion with God, nor any Enjoyment of him that you have at present satisfy you.* It cannot but be pleasant to you, you may and should delight in it, you ought to be very thankful for it; but not to think you have already attained, or are already perfect. The *Israelites* in the Wilderness were doubtless glad to see those large and lovely Clusters of Grapes, which were by the Spies brought them from the Land of Promise; but for all that they prosecuted their Journey, that they might possess the Land it self, and gather the whole Vintage.

tage. The Spouse sate under the Shadow of her Beloved with great Delight, and found his Fruit sweet to her taste, yet still she begg'd, that he would stay her with Flaggons, and comfort her with Apples. Consider that be your Enjoyments for the present what they will, yet they are but *mediate*, you are absent from the Lord; you see but as in a Glass, and not Face to Face, and as they are but *mediate*, so they are but *partial*. You do not know as you are known, you neither are with God so often as you would, nor have you so much of him as you would; that gracious Person was in pain, when he poured out that sad though short Complaint. *Rara hora brevis mora*. The loving Visits my Saviour gives me are but seldom, and the Time he staies with me is but short; and let this raise your Desires, and enlarge them after more.

Fifthly, *Never Promise your selves a full Enjoyment of God, while you are in this World*. While you are present in the Body, you will be absent from the Lord; here you are Minors and under Age, and shall be by your gracious Father provided for, but the main of your Estate is in Reversion. Never expect to be free from all Sin and sinful wandrings, nor to be perfect in Holiness and Happiness, till after the Resurrection you be taken up to behold the Face of God in Righteousness and Glory, and to be admitted to as clear a Vision and compleat a Fruition of him as the Creature in its highest Advancement, and noblest Frame is capable of.

Sixthly and Lastly, *In order thereto sit loose from the World*. You are but Pilgrims and Strangers here, your Countrey, your Fathers-House, your best, your last, your Everlasting Home is
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else-where, there your God is, thither your Lord and Saviour is gone to prepare and take up and keep a Place for you, and there he will continue till he come again to receive you to himself, that where he is you may be also. Now do you seriously and frequently think both of his coming to you, and of his sending for you, and of the one and the other with joy and longing; and be you most freely willing to bid Farewel to all Things here, even those which did afford you the greatest Pleasure: Live here notwithstanding the Burdens you groan under, and the Troubles you meet with, though it be a wicked, ungrateful, and malicious World, yet all the Days of your appointed Time, do you wait, be Content to stay till you are sent for; live as bad as the World is, and as much worse as Things are like to be, live as long as God will have you, live out of a Principle of Obedience unto God. You may live, though not to see some Men mend, for that will never be, they are past Grace, yet to see the Times mend, Godliness in Credit, and Peace upon *Israel*; but stand upon your Tip-toes in Expectation of a remove. And though you must go from beloved Relations, dear Friends, comfortable Possessions, and several Things which have made Life not only easie but pleasant to you; yet be willing to leave them all behind you, with *Elijah* to drop your Mantle, and to go Naked hence, when you take your flight to the upper Region of Light and Love, of Bliss and Glory; to those Mountains of Myrrh and Beds of Spices, where you shall be quite out of the reach of all Disturbances, having nothing of Distemper within, no assault from Enemies, no frowns upon the Face of God, no absenting,

senting, no withdrawing, no hiding for a Moment, but an uninterrupted and Eternal Rest, in the Arms and Bosom of Divine Love; and to that End hasten your Preparation, make your selves ready, and call in help from above, that you may be meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, and when your Lord who is your Life shall appear, you may appear with him in Glory. And in the mean Time, let your Souls in a kind of Holy Impatience get frequently upon the Wing, and be falling out in hearty Desires, and most fervent Pantings, as the enamoured longing Spouse was. *Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like a Roe, or a Young Hart upon the Mountains of Spices.* And since our Lord Jesus himself hath said, *Rev. 22. 20. Surely, I come quickly.* At this Assurance let your Hearts leap for Joy, and with *John* that beloved Disciple, do you Answer, *Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus.* Let it be the *Amen* both of Faith and Prayer.

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F I N I S.

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